KUNDALINI DIARY

A Visual Journey In Meditation

Santosh Sachdeva

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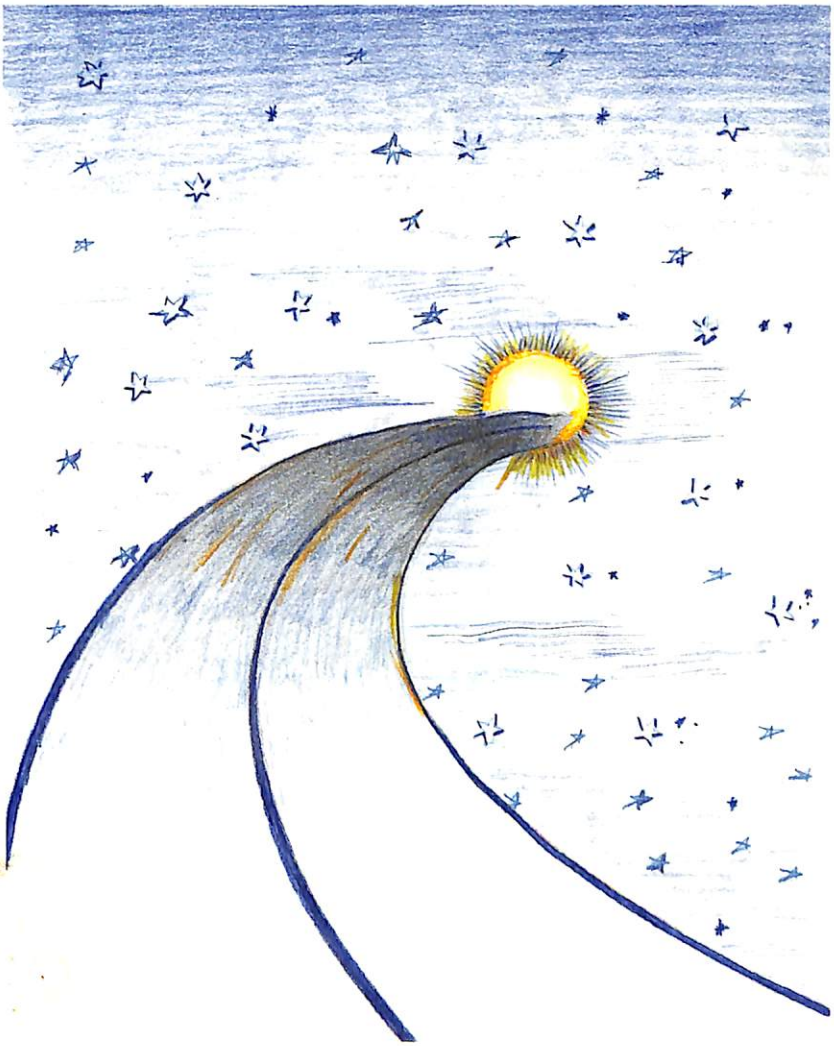

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Yogi Impressions

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Dedicated to the glorious *Kundalini,*
for unveiling herself to human perception.

THE GURU

Justice M. L. Dudhat was born in Ahmednagar on 11th March 1935. He completed his college education in Mumbai and started his legal practice in the Bombay High Court in 1961. A chance encounter in 1979, with *Swami* K. S. Ramanathanji (Jyotirmayananda), led to the inception of the first course on Mental Physics – also known as *Brahma Vidya*. After doing the course for three years with Swami Ramanathanji, Justice Dudhat started conducting the course independently from 1985 at different locations in Mumbai. Justice M. L. Dudhat follows the long tradition of householder *Gurus*, people who have gracefully borne the mantle of spiritual service while fulfilling the claims of a family and occupation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express with love and joy my thanks to:

Guru Dudhat, under whose guidance my spiritual growth unfolded and who has had to exercise all the qualities of love, compassion, firmness, indulgence and patience at different stages of my growth and evolution. At times, he was like a parent; at other times, like a Master; and most of the time, like an intimate friend. That is the relationship I have envisioned and enacted with God all my life. The same got transferred to the *Guru*.

Gurus have been a part of my life from childhood and through the years, as life has moved on. They have kept pace with me, lending their support through various stages of my growth, be it material or spiritual. However, the Masters whom I have experienced more consciously in the last six years are Justice M. L. Dudhat, Master Charles, Eckhart Tolle, Jyotirmayananda and Ramesh Balsekar. They all convey the message of love and compassion; the difference lies in the way it is conveyed.

Nirmal Avi Almeida, the most gentle person I have known, for her patience and care in carrying out the initial corrections in the manuscript. Dilip Kolte, for diligently providing me books on Theosophy and arranging dialogues with like-minded friends.

My children Shibani, Nikki and Gautam who through their wisdom, have helped me become wiser.

Rohit Arya who, with his vast knowledge of mythology, inherent wisdom and clear perception has helped me realize, to some extent,

the immensity of the wonder that is my experience.

Gautam, without whose intervention the book would not have happened. I admire his keen sense of perception, perfection and determination.

In any relationship, what is important to me is:

"Do not walk in front of me – I may not follow.
Do not walk behind me – I may not lead.
Walk beside me – and just be my friend."

My *Guru* probably sensed this.

FOREWORD

A visual journey in meditation. That's what this book is about. Perhaps the first of its kind, which deals with the experience of *Kundalini* on a visual level.

In 1995, Santosh undertook a course in spiritual development. Upon doing some sets of breathing exercises, meditations and affirmations as prescribed in the course, she started experiencing visions. She would promptly sketch the same, lest the visions be forgotten and lost forever. This process continued for three years, during which each day saw the birth of a new set of experiences and their corresponding illustrations. While this process was unfolding, she went through a lot of books written by Masters on the same subject and found, to her pleasant surprise, that what other realized beings had expressed as the written word, she had actually seen in the form of visions. As you go through this book, you will come across a few references from other books which describe what she saw.

Santosh's process of unfoldment was noted down by her in a diary. She felt the need to share this diary of her experiences and this led to her first book 'Conscious Flight Into The Empyrean' which records her diary entries till December 1995. Her diary entries from January to October 1996 are recorded in this book. It has been our endeavour to present her diary exactly as it is. No attempts have been made to disrupt the spontaneity of her drawings with professional retouching, although she has not been formally trained

in art. Her text entries alongside the drawings have been retained the way she wrote them, without attempts at editorial reconstruction, save for grammar and punctuation. The entries are in chronological order as maintained by her. Literally showing the step-by-step process of her spiritual unfoldment.

It was our intention to retain the purity of the process of unfoldment as recorded by her – an unfoldment which happened not to a sage sitting in his cave on a mountain top, meditating for over several years, but to someone leading a regular day-to-day existence in a busy cosmopolitan city. Someone who had no pretentions about her experiences, someone who didn't consider herself 'spritually advanced' as a result of the same and, most importantly, someone who wanted to share her experience 'as it is', to serve as a pointer to the Truth.

The nature of Santosh's meditative experiences is vast, all-encompassing, moving across the entire span of the Collective Consciousness. Poets, creative artistes, even scientists have expounded on the nature of consciousness and manifestation through the ages. As Lord Byron said, "I live not in myself, but I become portion of that around me." In the words of Einstein, "Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one." Or, in a modern context, best-selling author Sarah Ban Breathnatch says, "The greatest secret for living a happy and fulfilled life is realizing that everything is created in our minds before it manifests in the outer world. We must believe before we can see."

For those who have had similar experiences, here's a book they could well relate to. For those who have not experienced similar phenomena but practice meditation, or are curious about the same, this book will provide you some unique insights.

I personally like to think of Santosh's drawings of her meditational experiences as stained glass windows. They are there as part of consciousness, but we cannot see them in the dark. To see their magnificence, vibrancy and beauty, all we need is... Light!

Join Santosh on her journey. Encounter what she encounters, experience what she experiences. Think of this book as a road map showing the way – and you're bound to enjoy the trip. Undertake with her what is, truly, a 'journey without distance'.

In happiness and in peace.

– Gautam Sachdeva

PREFACE

This is the second volume in a series of three books that describes certain extraordinary and unusual experiences with the *Kundalini* energy that Santosh Sachdeva underwent. They are in the form of illustrations and entries in a diary that she kept from September 1995 to April 2000. When I first saw Volume-I, titled 'Conscious Flight Into The Empyrean', I was totally flummoxed – a situation that rarely transpires. In itself, there was an indication that this was something special. At first glance, the illustrations seemed to be childish drawings. However, they had this peculiar power of impressing themselves onto your mind, and then staying there like nagging fragments of a tune that refuse to leave you. The sheer visual impact of some of them was remarkable, which no amount of familiarity has been able to diminish. Also, the theme they dealt with – the awakening and subsequent experiences of the *Kundalini* – was unusual in itself.

Santosh herself was a most disconcerting person, but in a very positive manner. The book and the person made an intriguing combination.

What struck me most about her in subsequent interactions was the strange quality of holy innocence she had. This most untypical of persons had very little idea of the larger implications of her visions, and she did not seem to regard them as being in any way special. They were accepted with a calmness that still staggers the imagination, rather like a new and novel way of breathing but really

not worth making a fuss about. Best of all, she had absolutely no sense of self-importance because of these experiences. She did not, for a single moment that I knew her, expect to be treated as anybody special. This was so rare an occurrence in spiritual circles that it instantly endeared her to me.

Volume-I was an intensely personal recapitulation of the strange experiences she was undergoing, full of the haunting visuals she used to draw with no training in art whatsoever. For this volume, Santosh and her son Gautam asked me to put these visions in some sort of cultural or social perspective, little knowing that they were asking the master of procrastination to pitch in.

When begun, however, another serious problem arose.

There was too much eagerness on my part to demonstrate the extent of my knowledge. It was a megatherian ego trip where I explained relentlessly, until I explained away the whole book. Sense came later, along with the very necessary realization that my business was to let the book speak for itself, and to only contribute comments if they could add to the reader's understanding and appreciation of this process. Things went much better after that. However, there was so much material available that it was soon realized by all involved that three volumes would be necessary to do justice to the sequence and message of her meditative journeys. It is, of course, necessary to read all three volumes to grasp all the aspects of this marvellous adventure in Consciousness, but each book can be enjoyably read on its own too.

Of what use is such a book?

The answer to that could be that things spiritual are not to be judged solely by utilitarian perspectives. The 'use' of such a book is a tenuous notion and perhaps the wrong question to ask. However, the book does have a purpose and readers may probably gain much value from it.

In the first instance, the book is very useful (oops!) as a sort of reference map with significant signposts on the *Kundalini* journey. Santosh's own experiences vindicate this point of view. Once she had the book written down, she did some research and found an abundance of textual support that illuminated and paralleled her experiences.

It is important to note two things here. The first is that her own experiences were not photocopies of the Masters but personal variations on a large and accommodative template. The core of the

experience remains the same but each human brings his or her own abilities to experience, as well as his or her own personal levels of intensities to it. So, readers who are on the *Kundalini* path should not be surprised or dismayed if their experiences vary somewhat from those detailed in this book. They will still find enough similarity for them to recognize and be reassured that what they are experiencing is meaningful and that they are not going cuckoo.

The second important fact, and I cannot overstress this, is that most reports on the *Kundalini* experience are word-dependant. Everything we know about it was from the terse, reluctant statements of those who had undergone it and felt, correctly, that mere words were inadequate to describe what has to be experienced to be understood – and even then, silence was probably the best option. Most illustrations about the process were confined to figures of human bodies with the seven main *chakras*. They have become visual clichés today.

Santosh's work is pioneering and, to the best of my knowledge, absolutely unprecedented in visually representing many of the important processes and changes, transformations and insights that occur when the *chakras* are activated by the aroused *Kundalini*. That much abused and overused word 'unique' applies to this body of work. There has simply never been anything like this before in the field of *Kundalini* and that alone validates and justifies its existence.

Santosh feels very strongly that she has been given an *aadesh*, a spiritual command, to bring this work to the world. This sense of having been directed will be encountered at various points in the text. It is almost as though the book wrote itself through her, a willful emergence that she could not halt or turn around – rather like toothpaste squeezed out of a tube by invisible but purposeful hands. It may be that this reason is meaningful only to the author but at a spiritual plane, for those who are aware of these things, that is a very big reason indeed for the book to exist.

At this point, it is necessary to state that these drawings are not meant to be taken as literal illustrations of her experiences. They are symbolic representations of important stages and processes, not pictures from a *Kundalini* holiday, wishing-you-were-there. She is seeking to represent that which is inherently undefinable; not an enviable task by any standards. The drawings are like signs on a map; when you actually see the topological feature they refer to, your mind makes the connection with no great difficulty but you

never mistake a map for an actual picture of the existing reality. This is an important caveat, for people may feel that they should see and experience things exactly as represented in the drawings. Not so. The visuals are an aid to recognition – not a substitute for common sense – which, by the way, is the most important item of luggage you need on a *Kundalini* journey.

I have always been fascinated by the sheer fact that Consciousness exists. Mind, memory, imagination and visions all come back to that fundamental miracle. Myths, in many ways, deal with the varieties of consciousness, which is why they are ever popular with psychologists. Then, you stumble across a work like Santosh's, which is a rapid tour through so many different and unusual states of consciousness that you feel out of breath at times. To me, as a practicing mythologist, the primary attraction to this work was the many global mythic themes that she had accessed with practically no effort. The other points of significance emerged later. This book gave a possible answer to a core question in mythology – where do stories come from and why do they take the shape they do? They come from Inner Experiences, from strong visual imprinting. This is not just another version of archetypes though it is certainly connected to it. Not just archetypes, but all mythic thinking seems to exist in what Joseph Campbell called "the inner reaches of outer space." What this book seems to demonstrate is that such mythic structure is inherent in the condition of being human, which is why the tales of Man are so similar all over.

The differences in stories are due to differences in personalities and cultures – they are differences in interpretation of what is fundamentally the same set of inner visions. Most stories seem to revolve around a strong central image, and this book abounds in such images. Mankind has been losing its story-creating ability because modern life does not provide the sort of consciousness that makes it possible to access the mainsprings of story. The rapid explosion of the Sword and Sorcery genre of fiction, imitating the first myths, along with the New Age, is no coincidence by this understanding. They are both aspects of altered states of consciousness, indeed possible only because of such alteration.

Closely connected to this theme is the great one of cultural symbols. For those who are Hindus, this volume and the next will have many interesting insights as to how caste marks or distinguishing features and weapons of the gods came into being.

What is important to note here is that these aspects do not seem to be arbitrarily designed by imagination. They are experienced first, as Santosh experienced them, and then translated into cultural terms according to the predilections, abilities and conditioning of the person who saw them. But, Santosh does not see only Hindu symbols or even purely Indian symbols. Her experiences range freely over the Collective Consciousness of mankind, though she seems to have a special relationship with the archetypes of the Tarot. It is a lesson in how astonishingly similar humans actually are – all attempts to assert the contrary notwithstanding.

One of the disillusioning lessons learnt about people in my many years as a Tarot consultant, is that they cannot refrain from being dishonest with themselves. The mind is an instinctive pattern-making mechanism; there are good evolutionary reasons for adapting that style. However, more often than not, people use that ability to delude themselves; the capacity to gloss over and varnish one's experiences so that one comes out looking good is universal. It no longer disappoints to encounter it. But, Santosh was one person who was extraordinarily honest about her experiences and even more straightforward in admitting that she was, sometimes, all at sea as to how to interpret or regard the visions she was encountering. There was absolutely no attempt to strait-jacket any of this into preconceived notions nor was there any evidence of self-serving, pretentious humility. She reported exactly what she saw and felt and, as a consequence of that simple and rare action, she went into some interestingly deep waters. Since she did not seek to conceal her warts, she also did not have any hesitation in reporting experiences that may have seemed inflated. This honesty in reporting experiences is what is a really valuable quality of this book. You rarely encounter such clarity and straight talk.

Santosh often said, like a refrain, that her sheer ignorance (at the time) about matters spiritual, religious, psychological and mythological was what saved her. No doubt, ignorance was bliss. Since she did not have any opinions about the significance of what she was experiencing, she was neither frightened out of her wits nor inflated with pompous smugness at being somehow special. She could sail through experiences that would have seriously deranged more 'knowledgeable' persons and maintain her balance, long after the stage, when others would have been setting up a 'spiritual supermarket'. This is not to imply that she was not significantly

changed by her visions; nobody can experience such intensity and remain unaltered. What is important here is that she never lost her common sense and her grip over daily reality.

In India, families discourage spiritual pursuits among members for the good reason that they usually render the person unfit for normal living. Most of them are also so swiftly infused with a self-awarded odour of sanctity, that they become impossible to live with. In Santosh's case, nothing could be further from the truth. If anything, her sense of humour has become even stronger and that is always a primary signal of engaging with life. The experiences documented in this book are proof that you do not need to live in a cave to be spiritual, nor do you go beyond the social pale by achieving certain levels of heightened consciousness.

So much fear-mongering has gone into extant literature about the *Kundalini* and its arousal, that this book is a great relief in its assertion of another possibility. The *Kundalini* and its arousal is a natural, physiological process available to anybody who is willing to submit to its discipline and is dedicated to its pursuit. The 'dangers' of *Kundalini* arousal are only as much as learning a martial art. If you overtax yourself and try too hard before you are ready for it, you can end up hurting yourself. That is an acceptable risk, for it is your responsibility not to act foolishly and cause harm to yourself. Ego and an inflated sense of self-importance, or a wildly optimistic appraisal of one's abilities, have to be left at the door of the *dojo* if you want to progress in any martial art. The same applies in the case of the *Kundalini* exercises and meditations. In fact, it is not unknown for martial arts practice, the forms-work of *kata*, to lead to spontaneous activation of the *chakras* and explains why a significant number of veteran martial artists also end up as Spiritual Masters. Santosh is living proof that the *Kundalini* is not to be dreaded but can become a good, wise and loving friend.

To continue the martial arts analogy, the one person who sees to it that you do not get into hot water and enables you to climb upward when you seem to have plateaued is the *Guru*. Santosh is absolutely clear about the importance and the vital necessity of the *Guru*. In the first place, proper activation of the *Kundalini* under a *Guru's* supervision goes a long way in avoiding the dangers that might befall you. And then, the *Guru* is always there for you in a manner that no other human relationship can permit. The book is very clear that without the grace of the *Guru* nothing is possible;

you will find yourself in difficulties. The increased sense of bonding and identification with the *Guru Field* and, through that, with the Universal Consciousness, is one of the most interesting aspects of the book. It reiterates an ancient Indian lesson that the *Guru* is paramount. Santosh's reverence for her *Guru* was never syrupy. He was a strong and empowering force that kept her out of all the byways of the dark side. It is an interesting and important point to keep in mind if you are planning to walk the *Kundalini* path.

Although it is never stated, a distinct aspect of the book is that death ceases to be the obsession it normally is when the *Kundalini* is flowing freely. This goes against the grain of the usual state of mind, but it is a very liberating breakthrough. As a way of being, it is startling in its freedom.

My comments on Santosh's illustrations and diary entries appear between symbols which look like this:

Just before the main text of this book, three visuals are displayed from the end of Volume-I to place this book in context as well as in sequence. Giving in to the temptation to generalize, one may say that Volume-I is about the experiences with the *Kundalini* that deal with a Personal level, while Volume-II sees those experiences expand themselves into the 'External' level, and Volume-III sees the process attain the Universal dimension. However, they are all experiences that take place in the interior realms of consciousness. Volume-III will carry forward the themes developed in this book until they come to a final resolution. The third volume will also have a special section where the archetypal and symbolic aspects of her visions will be explained in more detail.

Welcome to a singular and rewarding journey!

– Rohit Arya

Transitions (From Volume-I)

These visuals are representative of the three levels mentioned in the preface and are indicative as well of the core issues of dealing with the *Kundalini* experience.

There is the activated, indeed extremely energetic, *chakra* in the first picture and what it signifies.

The primary importance of the *Guru's* grace and guidance in causing these transformations is clearly brought out in the second visual.

The third visual deals with the Universal Consciousness, also called *Shiva* in Indian culture. It is a prescient statement of the major themes in this Volume and the next one.

16 December 1995

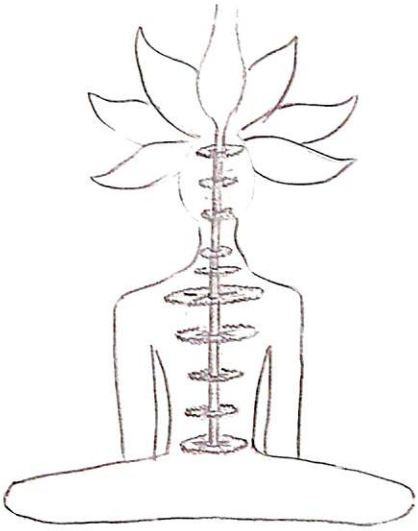
A straight rod runs down the body. A *chakra* starts rotating at the head, gradually travelling down to the base of the spine, then going up again, until it reaches back to the top of the head. It is rotating all the time. Once the *chakra* reaches the head, it becomes a luminous flame giving the sensation of a flower with petals folding and unfolding. Next, several *chakras* seem to pile up on the top of my head, with every *chakra* rotating in a different direction. This is another strange vision of the activation of the *Kundalini* by the descending *Pranic* energy.

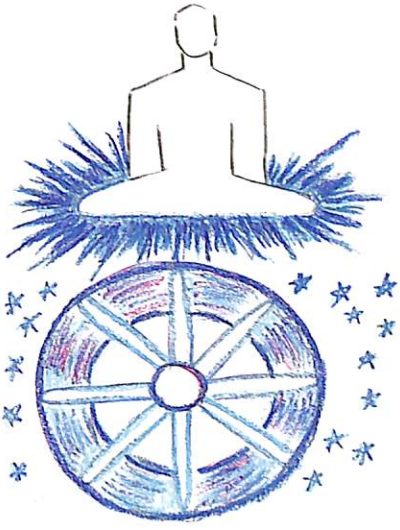
19 December 1995

I see the *Guru* sitting on a disc, which is translucent and of a vibrant blue colour. The disc is throwing a beam which moves like a searchlight. As the disc starts rotating it emits blue rays. These rays get together and form a bottle-like container, which then forms part of a gigantic wheel, which starts rotating in a starry sky.

31 December 1995

Early morning: I dream that I am in a hotel, looking down onto the swimming pool. Instead of walking down the stairs, I just take off into space, going down and then up again. I even start to experiment walking in space. I come across my mother's maid Sunita, who says that she will take me to a great *Sadhu*. I go there and see a group of people sitting on the ground. They are all dark-skinned, mainly children and young people, all of them being unclad from the waist upward. A form is sitting in *Samadhi* on a platform under a big tree. It reminds me of *Lord Shiva*.





CHAKRAS AND THE BODY TEMPLE

1. **Muladhar (Base chakra):** It is located at the base of the spine. This is the *chakra* where the *Kundalini* energy is in a dormant state. In this state, its function is to energize and strengthen the physical body. With the development of this *chakra,* the aspirant becomes highly intellectual. It belongs to the earth principle.

2. **Swadhisthan (Sacral chakra):** It controls the sex organs and their related function at the mental, emotional and physical level. When developed, this *chakra* opens up the dimensions of clairvoyance, clairaudience, intuition, etc. This *chakra* is said to belong to the astral plane. It is the physical creative centre.

3. **Manipur (Navel chakra):** When this *chakra* is developed, it gives the knowledge of the physiological and subtle body. The aspirant can enter other realms and attain knowledge of those planes.

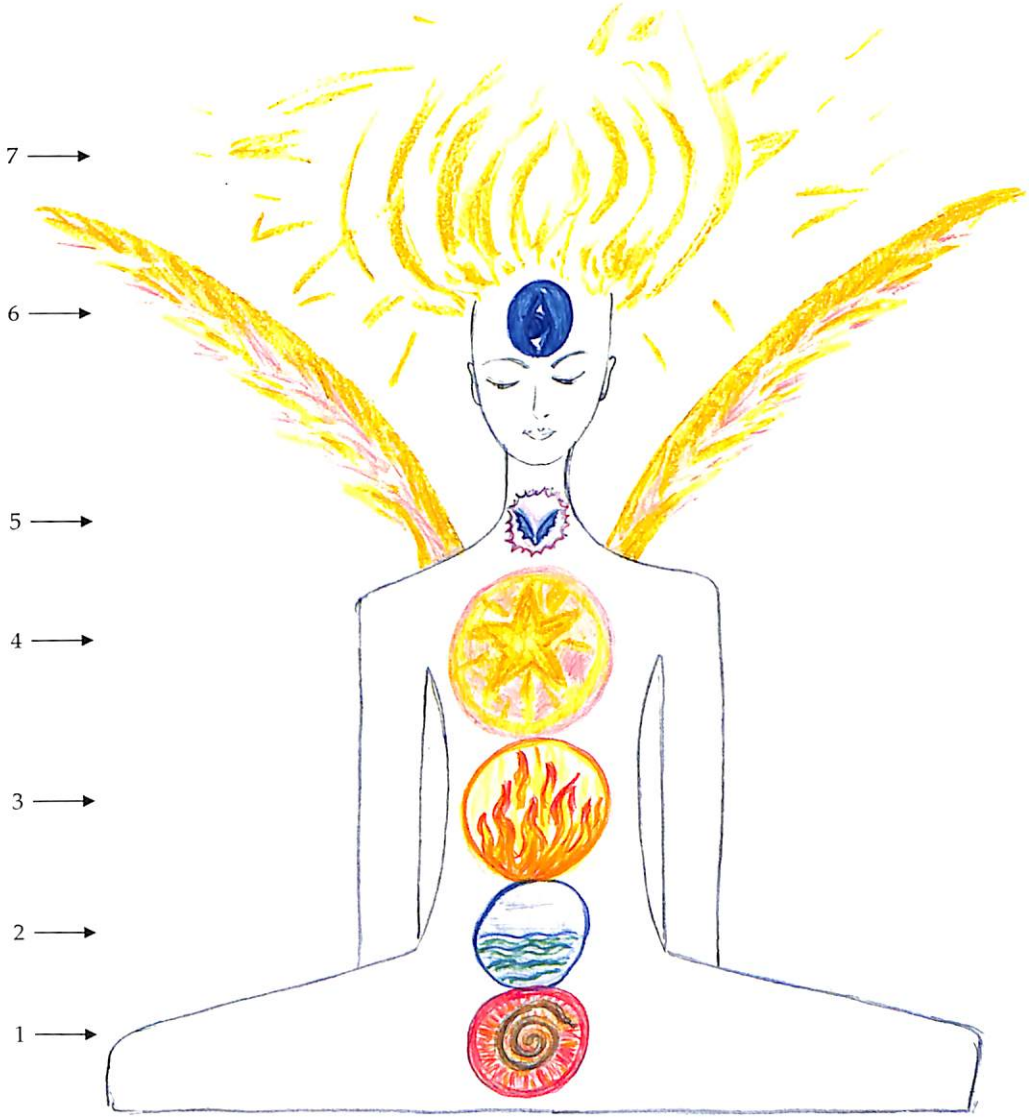
4. **Anahat (Heart chakra):** When this *chakra* is developed, the ego of the aspirant is destroyed and that person can hear *yogic* occult sounds like: 'chinchin' – a bell ringing, the sound of a conch, the sound of high winds, the 'Ummm' of the drum, etc.

5. **Vishuddha (Throat chakra):** It is located in the centre of the throat. It is the centre for higher creativity. When developed, this *chakra* leads the aspirant to higher stages of evolution and travels into the region of the void.

6. **Ajna (Brow chakra):** It is located between the eyebrows. It controls and energizes the pituitary gland and the entire body. It is called the Master *chakra* because it controls all the major *chakras* and the endocrine system, and also affects the vital organs. It is also the centre of the higher or abstract mind and gives the power of Will, Wisdom and Activity. The three nerves – *Ida, Pingala* and *Sushumna* – meet here. The *Kundalini* starts her journey towards the thousand-petalled lotus or *Sahasrar chakra* from the *Ajna chakra. (In this chakra, the aspirant loses body consciousness and extraordinary bliss is the result. Between the Ajna chakra and Sahasrar chakra is the Manas chakra, the Soma chakra and the Niralambapuri chakra.)*

7. **Sahasrar (Crown chakra):** It is located at the crown of the head. This is the entry point of the Divine energy and the centre of Higher Consciousness.

The chart on the right, showing the location of the seven main chakras in the etheric body, is a stylized version created by the author. The colours and symbols shown here do not necessarily correspond to the descriptions in the traditional literature on Kundalini.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When consciousness at rest moves and the process of embodiment starts, the *chakras* are a part of that process. These *chakras* start moving till they come together and place themselves in a certain pattern and start rotating. Before I knew that they were *chakras,* I would call them discs. The *chakras* are of different sizes and are coiled like springs in different densities or intensities. There are various other *chakras* and they are placed outside the physical body, i.e. in the etheric body.

Each of the seven *chakras* has its counterpart in the physical body in the form of vital organs. The efficient functioning of these physical organs depends upon the functioning of the *chakras* in the etheric body. The more congested a *chakra,* the denser the related organ. Congestion of the *chakra* is related to the physical, mental and emotional baggage an individual body-mind organism carries throughout its evolution. Therefore, the major *chakras* not only control and energize the physical body but also control and affect the individual's emotional and mental body.

In my case, the *Spleen chakra* (which is located to the left of the bottom rib on the left side of the ribcage) became the *chakra* that was given special attention. This controls and energizes the spleen, affects the general *Pranic* energy levels, the quality of blood and the immune system.

Once my *chakras* were activated to a pace that was different from their normal rhythm, I found that they did not necessarily follow one pattern of movement and that they could change their size and shape, expanding and contracting according to their requirement. The movement pattern could also change from rhythmic to chaotic. They could twirl like a flipped coin or create a half-rolling movement like a coin standing on edge, they could move like a pendulum in clockwork rhythm going tick-tock-tick-tock, and they could move up and down, clockwise or anti-clockwise. At times, the *Ajna chakra* could start in a frenzy, activating and setting the other *chakras* into rhythmic and synchronized motion. I experienced the vibrations of the *Sahasrar chakra,* the *Ajna chakra* and the *Anahat chakra* as the flapping of a big bird's wings in flight. I experienced the *Manipur chakra* as a big flower with a shining, white globe as its centre. As I became aware and accustomed to their movement and change in rhythm, I realized that the changed rhythm would portend a particular event or form. I could identify the form, whether human, bird or animal, by its vibration much before the form appeared. I visualized a *chakra* like a spider's web. For a *chakra* to be fully open, all the threads have to dissipate so that the energy flows freely. This is totally a meditational experience. The thought of exercising this ability in my day-to-day functioning has never entered my mind.

AFFIRMATION

I am now entering upon the greatest teaching accessible to man, for I am learning the secret of existence.

The riddle of the universe is about me; I am now solving it.

I learn why men die, why they are born and why they live.

I learn why men succeed and why they fail, why they are happy and why they are discontent. I have the power and the ability to live as long as I desire, to achieve whatever I wish and the doors of my mind are now open that I may learn how this is done.

I now learn that man is the master of his destiny, that man is the author of death. I realize that death is a mental concept and not a law of life.

I now realize that all negation is a mental concept and not a law of life.

I learn that there is only one law of creation – the law of life.

I am now developing the power and the ability to realize in my own life the one divine principle in which all success, happiness and peace reside.

And I thank the Infinite Spirit within me
For the knowledge of this wondrous truth
Now revealed to my consciousness.

– *Ramanathan, Swami K. S. – 'Mental Physics: Lectures and Lessons'. (Private circulation), Bombay, India, 1980, p. 142.*

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Piping down the valleys wild,
Piping songs of pleasant glee,
On a cloud I saw a child,
And he laughing said to me:

'Piper sit thee down and write
In a book that all may read.'
So he vanish'd from my sight,
And I pluck'd a hollow reed.

And I made a rural pen,
And I stain'd the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
Every child may joy to hear.

Songs of Innocence
– William Blake

"I would like you to realise a great child-likeness of spirit as you feel that, all down through the ages, we have been waiting to meet. You and I have been seeking each other, though not knowing how or why, and now, in this life, I am to make manifest to you the highest knowledge of the truth of life. I am the messenger; you must take the message."

– *Ramanathan, ibid., p. 63.*

As I look back on my life, I realize that the course of evolution for any organism is set from the moment of conception.

My grandparents had a *Kul-Guru* (family *Guru*). His name was *Swami* Mohangiriji and we would address him as *Swamiji*. He, along with three or four attendants, would spend a month or so with us every year. This pattern continued even after my grandparents were no more. We children grew up with this presence and with the routine of paying our respects to *Swamiji* before going to school and, in the evening, spending time with him and taking part in the evening prayers. I remember him as a gentle person with whom I was entirely comfortable. There was no barrier and communication on any subject would be complete. With him, one had the freedom of making mistakes, learning from them and then going back to him, knowing that he would understand. From all of us, I was the only child who was initiated.

Coupled with this, we had the good fortune of our parents migrating to the hill town of Mussoorie in 1948, after the Partition of India. Our father seemed to have a fascination for those in saffron robes. Since we were at the foot of the Himalayas, we would come in contact with the *sadhus* who travelled up and down. They were often invited to take refuge with us for a night, if they so desired. In a way, being in the company of holy men has been a way of life, a natural happening, which later led to my reading about the ones I did not know.

Nature, or the Almighty, has made sure that I, or this body-mind organism, have been in constant touch with the Source. So, when the time was right, the living *Guru* and the subconsciously seeking *shishya* would be a part of a spontaneous happening in the scheme of the functioning of Totality, and this would lead to a quantum leap for this particular organism.

What is recorded in this diary are my experiences brought forth by the breathing exercises and affirmations given in the course book 'Mental Physics: Lectures and Lessons'.

It was at the insistence of a friend that I joined the course in Mental Physics, conducted by Justice M. L. Dudhat in Mumbai, in August 1995. This is a course in self-development and comprises of lectures, breathing exercises and affirmations.

I have travelled a long road since August 1995, and it has taken me to new horizons of discovery. It has made me explore dimensions I did not know existed. I discovered the wonder of the human body, the mind and the identity of the Self.

How did this happen?

At the very start of the course, it was clearly indicated by the Source Consciousness that Justice M. L. Dudhat was the Divine Channel or *Guru*. I would get my spiritual instructions from him through thought, word or gesture. It would be up to me to inculcate the degree of receptivity, sensitivity and awareness that was required to grasp the transmission. I realized (intuitively) that this would only be possible if I dropped all defences and left myself completely open to what was emanating from the *Guru*. It is rightly said that when the aspirant is ready, the *Guru* will manifest himself. However, the aspirant has to be extremely alert, aware and attentive in order not to miss the great revelation. If it is missed, one can only conjecture as to how many more lives it would take for a similar opportunity to present itself, depending on the building up of further *karmic* debts.

The *Guru's* most simple words are loaded with power; one needs to take them as God's truth. They may be uttered most casually, but the true aspirant's ears will always be alert and will take each word as a command. The catch lies in the fact of this subtlety; the aspirant has to realize it for himself or herself. Knowledge just flows from the *Guru* – it is for us to be receptive and absorb.

I had the tendency to look beyond the simple words "Do not doubt, do not fear. The riddle of the universe is about me and I am now solving it," in the course book. These words lent a mystery to the whole system of Mental Physics and aroused my curiosity to the extent of disregarding caution and leaping into the unknown.

This 'unknown' introduced itself to me in the form of visuals. The breathing exercises had triggered the process of unravelling my past lives, giving me knowledge about the person I had been; a person who had gone through rigorous practice on the path of self-discovery. I visualized myself sitting in meditation at the cremation grounds. At another time in another life, I saw myself at the cremation grounds once more. A funeral pyre was lit and I collected a cauldron full of burning coal and ashes and poured it over my head, with the recitation of a *mantra*.

I think that this kind of *sadhana* requires a brave heart. I immediately started to reap the fruits of the work done in that life. I started to discover the inner world of light and the power of thought, which becomes form and is let out as the 'Word' already manifested, needing only to fructify. After realizing the power of

the 'Word', I learnt to be more aware of my thoughts before letting them out as words. I realized that the past and the future that we occupy ourselves with have no meaning at all – the past does not exist and the future is unknown. The need is only to be in the 'Now'.

For five months, it was action replay. I was being given a brief run-through of the power of the affirmations and the Word, and the effect they have inside and outside the body.

It was also during this time that the cosmic finger kept pointing at the teacher whom I was, in due course, to acknowledge as my spiritual *Guru*. It was important for me that the Source itself point him out to me.

Confusion, doubts and mutual testing are perhaps a natural part of this profound relationship between two individuals on the evolutionary path. The more I think about it, the more I realize that the testing is usually a projection of the disciple's inner turmoil. On the *Guru's* part, there is an ever-present genuineness, openness, acceptance and love as the result of being a Channel of the Divine. Once the veil of ignorance is lifted from the student's mind, there comes an almost instantaneous recognition of the *Guru*, bringing in its wake a surge of gratitude and surrender to the Master. In this transformation lies the seed of transmutation of several lifetimes of *karma*, bringing to fruition the manifestation of grace in the life of the seeker.

The *Guru* not only serves as a mascot for the outward projection of the inner teacher but also as a very real, nurturing, accepting and reassuring presence whenever the process of awakening is distressful.

It was only when I started to experience the movements of the *chakras* that I realized that something unusual was happening in my body. I was not unduly worried but only curious, and started to observe it. The following passage gave some clarity and understanding of the activity that was taking place in my bodies.

"The 'etheric' centre which keeps alive the physical vehicle is said to correspond with an 'astral' centre of four dimensions, but between them is a closely woven sheath or web composed of a single compressed layer of physical atoms, which prevents a premature opening up of communication between the planes... Each of these 'astral' centres has certain functions; at the navel, a simple power of feeling; at the spleen, 'conscious travel' in the astral body; at the heart, 'a power to comprehend and sympathise with the vibrations of other astral entities'; at the throat, power of hearing on the astral plane; between the eyebrows, 'astral sight';

at the 'top of the head', perfection of all faculties of the astral life... When vivified by the 'Serpent Fire' they become gates of connection between the physical and 'astral' bodies."

– Woodroffe, Sir John – 'The Serpent Power'. Ganesh & Company, Madras, India. First Paperback Edition, 1995, pp. 7-9.

In stark contrast to the writings of many aspirants, my experience underscores the love, the effulgent beauty, the gentleness and the glory of *Mahashakti Kundalini* unveiling herself to ordinary human perception. In fact, I found myself blessed to be in daily communion with this gentle, cosmic force residing within me. She made me aware of the special source for the feelings of tenderness and loving care, and of being cherished to a depth not possible in ordinary human interaction. The warmth that this beloved force generates cannot be described. It's the warmth of tenderness. It goes beyond any human touch. Not even a mother's embrace has it. It is like being in the womb of love.

The exercises not only awakened my hidden and dormant energies but also endowed me with good health, renewed confidence, vigour and a joyful disposition, bringing to a conscious level the very nature of my being. *Kundalini* transformed my body and mind. The Energy first cleared and set in rhythmic motion the etheric centres, which in turn energized the physical organs, thus ensuring their robust functioning. Once this was taken care of, the Energy started to do its work of clearing the *nadis* and lastly, it moved onto clear the brain of all its blocks, erasing, creating and blasting the ones that were really gross. When the blasting went on, there was the sound as if a skull had cracked on the funeral pyre and my physical body would get a jerk. On speaking to *Guruji* about this, he told me that this indicated the destruction of old *karmas*. This was heartening, because I didn't have to go through working them out. Sometimes, I was aware of a sensation of the brain actually moving to the left or right in the cranium as I shifted from analytical thinking to the more intuitive or dream-like state. There were times when the nudges and shoves became physically palpable.

My etheric centres were cleared by an outside agency. In time, I started to address this agency as the 'White Brotherhood' because I would see figures in white moving around. At times, they would be sitting with me with huge books, the pages of which would be turned for me. Or, we would be somewhere in space and I would be expected to give attention to some charts. Invariably, in the early

hours of the morning, there would be a group of sages sitting with me for meditation. This was probably done to keep the vibratory level at a certain degree to enhance my awareness or focus. It is recently that I have come to know what the words 'White Brotherhood' really stand for, as explained below.

"A large number of men have attained the Adept level – men not of one nation, but of all the leading nations of the world – rare souls who with indomitable courage have stormed the fortresses of nature, and captured her innermost secrets, and so have truly earned the right to be called Adepts. Among them there are many degrees and many lines of activity; but always some of them remain within touch of our earth as members of this Hierarchy which has in charge the administration of the affairs of our world and of the spiritual evolution of our humanity. This august body is often called the Great White Brotherhood..."

– Leadbeater, C. W. – 'A Text Book Of Theosophy'. The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, India, 1912. Fourteenth Reprint, 1997, pp. 13-14.

There are distinct phases of meditational experience brought on as the direct result of the changes that take place in the etheric body like seeing the *Prana* and the *chakras*, becoming aware of the shifts in vibration and astral travel. I cannot express the wonder at being singled out to be the recipient of this sacred knowledge. How patiently and minutely the Source has drilled into me that I am 'That' – the all-encompassing Source Consciousness. Though there was a great sense of joy, wonder and curiosity, at no stage did I ever feel that anything strange was happening. It was as if I were assigned a project or a job that needed to be done. If I didn't understand something, I would ask for clarification.

Some of the astral beings did try to scare me off, but this, I think, was at a lower vibratory level. I would just curiously watch their contorted faces and hands trying to claw at me and my hair, or when they would lift me and smash me to the ground, the impact of which would leave me shaken. I figured out that these beings could not impact my physical body, so there was no physical pain. They had the capacity to attack only my psyche. When I did not respond to the violence, they deployed seductive tactics. They would play with me. I would feel someone come from behind me and cover my eyes with both hands. I would keep my cool and ask the entity to introduce itself. Someone would come and kiss me on the lips. It was all 'play'; nothing vulgar or obscene. I realized that this whole 'play' was a war on the psychic plane and after I had passed the test, so to say, I was ordered by a figure in white to move on.

It is my good fortune that I had not read much literature on *Kundalini yoga* and the hazards faced therein. There were no conditioned responses; all happenings were dealt with as they presented themselves. I did not know I was supposed to be scared, petrified or even go crazy.

The realization dawned that I would have to sharpen my awareness and alertness in order to document those centres and parts of the brain which, when activated, would bring forth knowledge hitherto not visually documented. If I had been instantly aware of this, there would probably have been a much more detailed rendering of the subject.

The truth dawned that there can never be an end to creation; it is a rhythmic pattern, which like any other law – the eternal, everlasting, unchangeable, changeless, immutable laws of nature – has been going on since eternity, and will go on. If I, as a thinking and conscious entity, allow myself to flow with the scheme of things ordained for me, I will complete my cycle of evolution in a peaceful and harmonious manner without blocking the process that nature has ordained for me.

Chapter Two

REACHING FOR THE STARS

I am the daughter of Earth and Water,
And the nursling of the Sky;
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;
I change, but I cannot die.
For after the rain when with never a stain
The pavilion of Heaven is bare,
And winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams
Build up the blue dome of air,
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
I arise, and unbuild it again.

The Cloud
– P. B. Shelley

What I realize at this point in time is that what has gone by in the past year of meditation is nothing but a visual replay of a past life. The details that the visual replay has brought forth are truly amazing. By going over my first book *'Conscious Flight Into The Empyrean'* in a step-by-step manner, I realized that by the end of this particular chapter, I had completed the process of moving through all the *chakras* – including the *Sahasrar* – and merging with the Source.

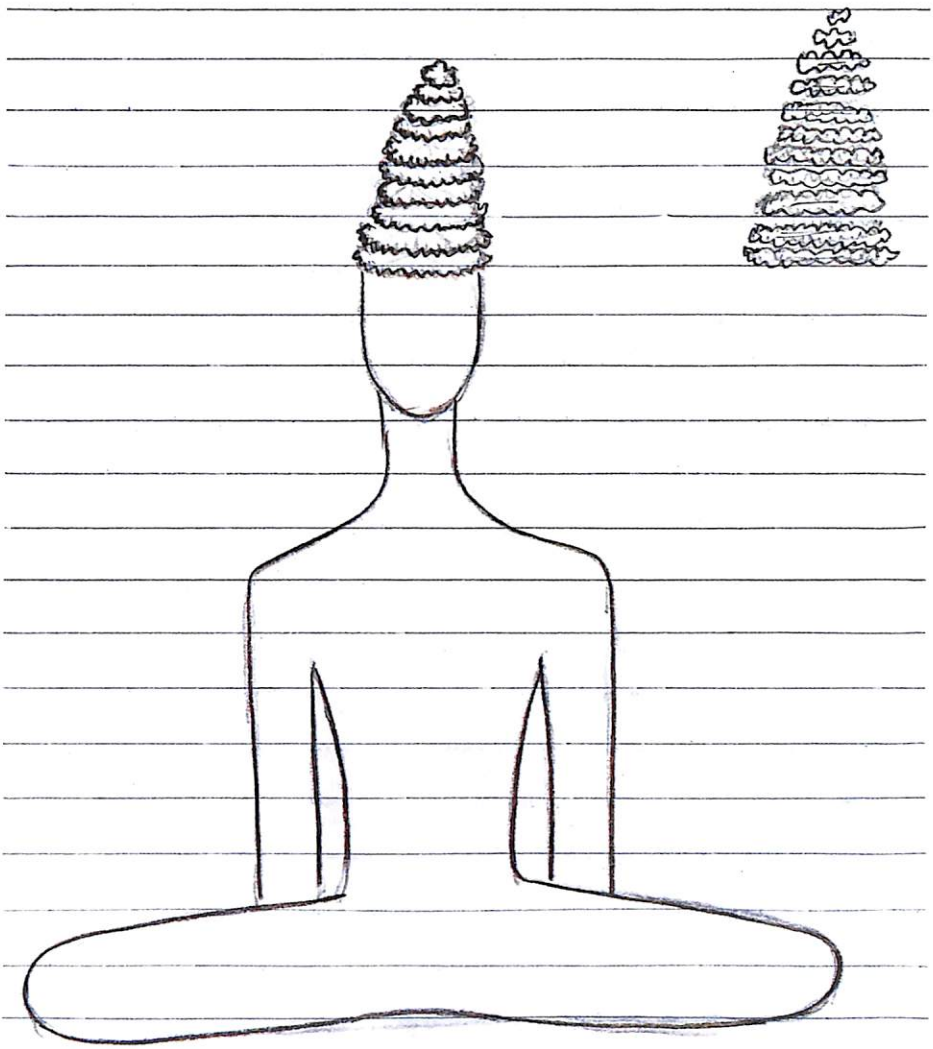
9 January 1996

I see a crown of *chakras* on my head. They rotate in different directions.

Looking back, I notice that until now, I was drawing a complete head of my figure in meditation. Now, the heads are open at the top signifying a fully operating *Sahasrar chakra*.

The divinity of my *Guru* is brought to my knowledge time and again.

The formation of *chakras* is interesting in that it seems to be like the *shikhara* of any generic Hindu temple. All temples are symbolic representations of the human body with the various *chakras* represented therein. The *Sahasrar chakra* quite literally corresponds to the *shikhara*. Santosh has been accessing this ancient Indian archetype, which explains this symbolic diagram on her part.



9 January 1996

Group meditation at the Guru's residence: Today, the meditation is magnificent. I see my *Guru* at the head of a shining gold-dust circle, going around himself, and then seated on a circle of luminous pink dust.* The meditation leaves me with feelings of child-like love, joy and freedom – unfettered and uncaged. I long to be FREE! FREE! FREE!

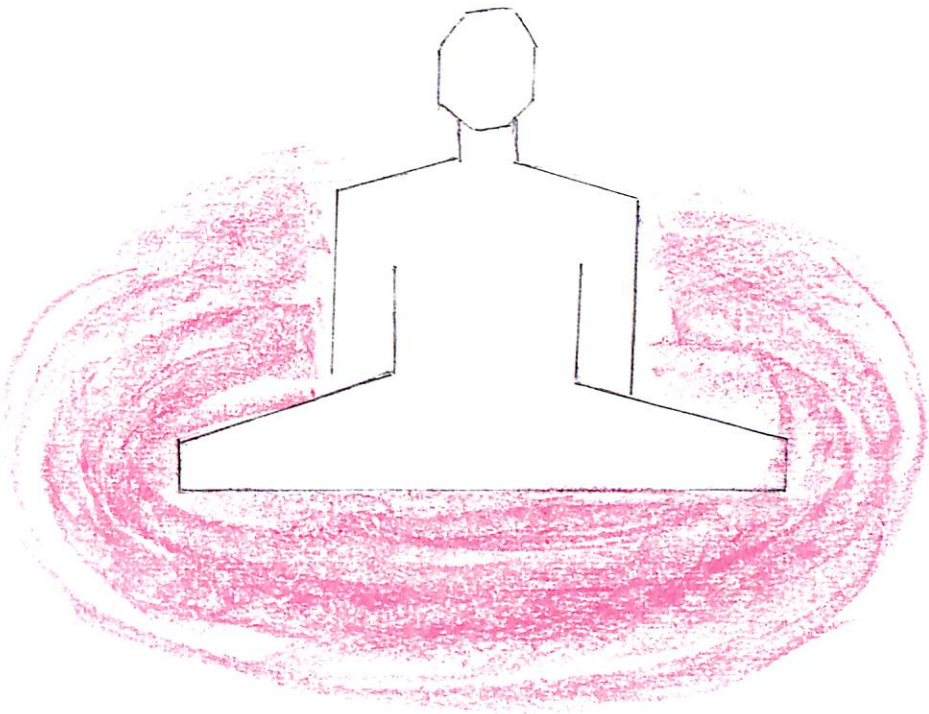
The cube-like figure that she draws to represent the *Guru* is remarkable because the square – and by extension the square in three dimensions, the cube – is the most stable form in the Hindu cultural view. The *Guru* is the author's point of certainty in the many momentous changes that were occurring within her. She has represented that certitude in this basic posture of stability. The gold-dust circle is actually a spiral of expanding consciousness and a common enough experience – though not always in conjunction with this cube.

**"This is the specialized vitality which one man may readily pour into another in whom it is deficient... A man in robust health usually absorbs and specializes so much more of this vitality than is actually needed by his own body that he is constantly radiating a torrent of rose-coloured atoms, and so unconsciously pours strength upon his weaker fellows without losing anything himself; or by an effort of his will he can gather together this superfluous energy and aim it intentionally at one whom he wishes to help."*

– Leadbeater, C. W. – 'The Chakras: A Monograph'. The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, India, 1927. Thirteenth Reprint, 1996, p. 56.

10 January 1996

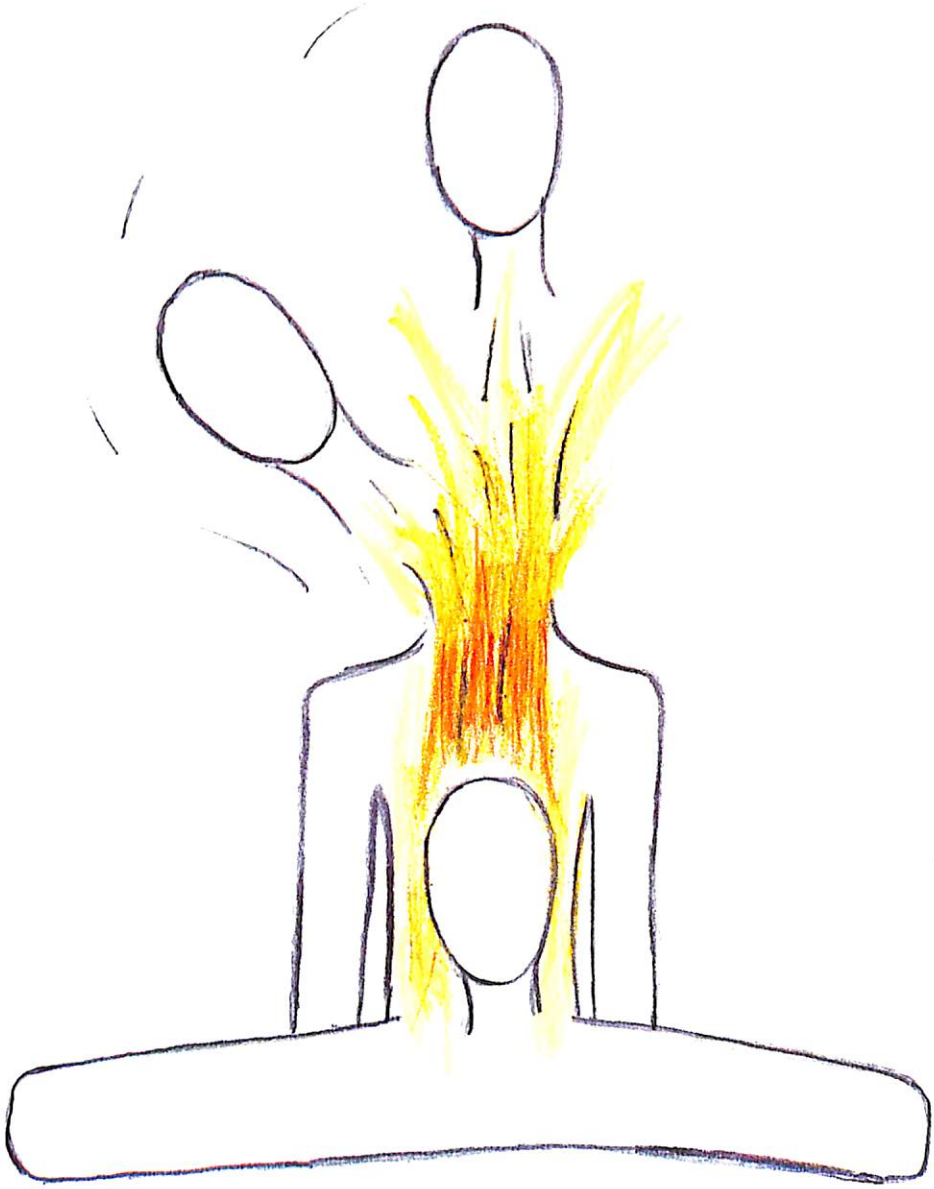
While practicing a breathing exercise the energy starts to rise, but my body cannot cope with it and goes into spasms and motions of retching. I stop the exercise and sit down to meditate.



10 January 1996

During the course of meditation, the head seems to float away to the left leaving a big hole between the shoulders. Light starts to pour into the body through the gap. Then, the head comes back and goes right down into the abdomen. It is like plunging into the mysterious and glorious depths of my innermost being.

The detached head is actually more remarkable than it seems; through it, Santosh has captured the image of *Kali*, known as *Chinnamasta*, in reverse. The decapitated head of the Goddess allows the nourishing light to flow out for the world and is represented by blood. However, for the light to flow in as well, the head – the seat of the crabby intellect and sense of separate self – has to be removed.



10 January 1996

At some stage, I am travelling fast on a straight starry path, at the end of which there is a bright, blue light – like that from the headlights of a car. Then I am in a tunnel, but a torch seems to light my path.

"When the light of the mind is cast in front of us, up the stream of time instead of down it, we are gazing into the world of ideals... the windows through which he gazes into the Infinite, and through which again the Infinite looks back to him. Those windows alter, grow larger and more beautiful, let more and more of Heaven's light into the soul."

– Codd, Clara M. – 'Meditation – Its Practice and Results'. The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, India, 1952. Eighth Reprint, 1986, p. 21.

10 January 1996

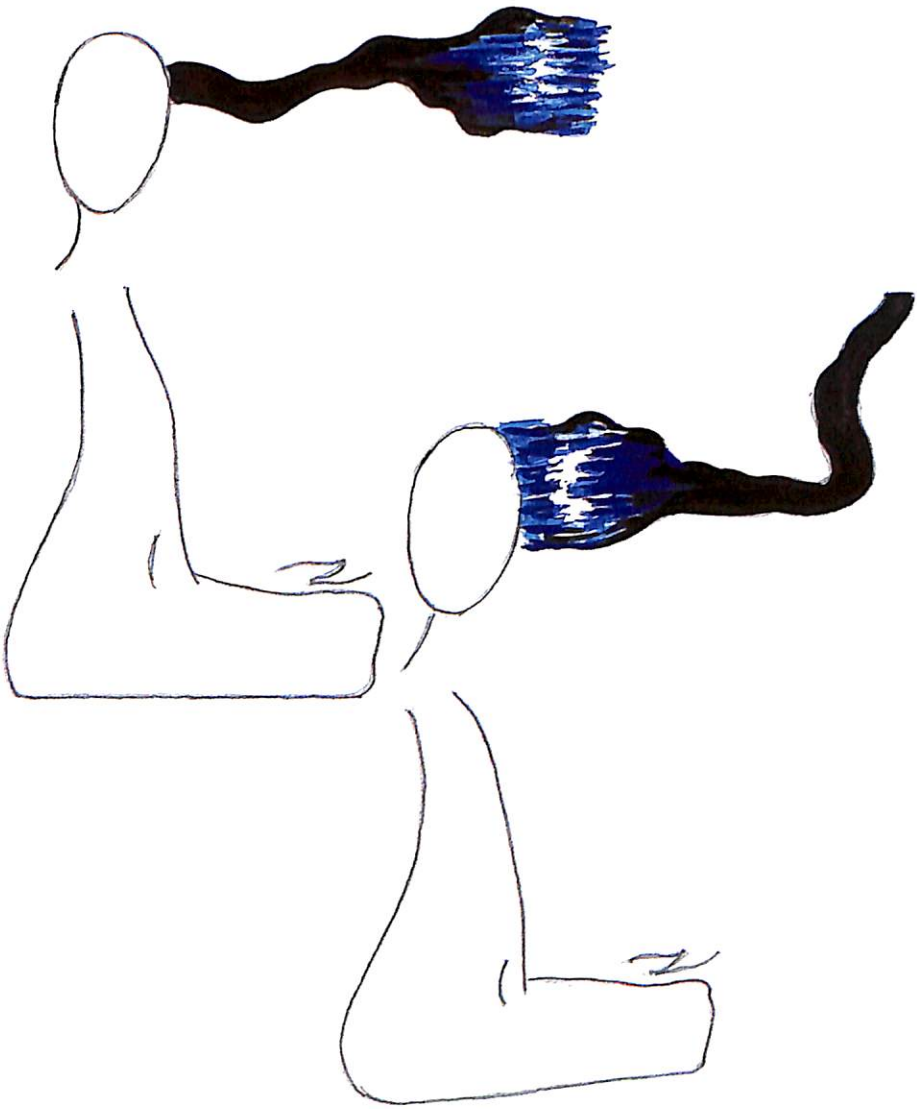
There is a flexible, bugle-like tube emerging from between the eyebrows. It has a wide mouth at the end, out of which electric blue streaks of light run out. It then turns on itself with the wide mouth touching the forehead, and the streaks go out from the narrow end.

"The centre between the eyebrows is connected with sight in yet another way. It is through it that the power of magnification of minute physical objects is exercised. A tiny flexible tube of etheric matter is projected from the centre of it, resembling a microscopic snake with something like an eye at the end of it. This is the special organ used in that form of clairvoyance, and the eye at the end of it can be expanded or contracted, the effect being to change the power of magnification according to the size of the object which is being examined... This little snake projecting from the centre of the forehead was symbolized upon the head-dress of the Pharaoh of Egypt, who as the chief priest of his country was supposed to possess this among many other occult powers."

– *Leadbeater – 'The Chakras: A Monograph', op. cit., p. 79.*

11 January 1996

On reflecting, I'm not sure if there is any difference between occultism and spiritualism. If there is, then I think I have been taken on a revision course of spiritualism interspersed with occultism. It is all related to some past life. In my mind, I associate *tantrik* knowledge with cremation grounds. I can now fathom the reason for such a quick run for me through all these curious events. Visions of my past life give me an insight into the system of meditation I had followed, which was mainly carried out in such locales.

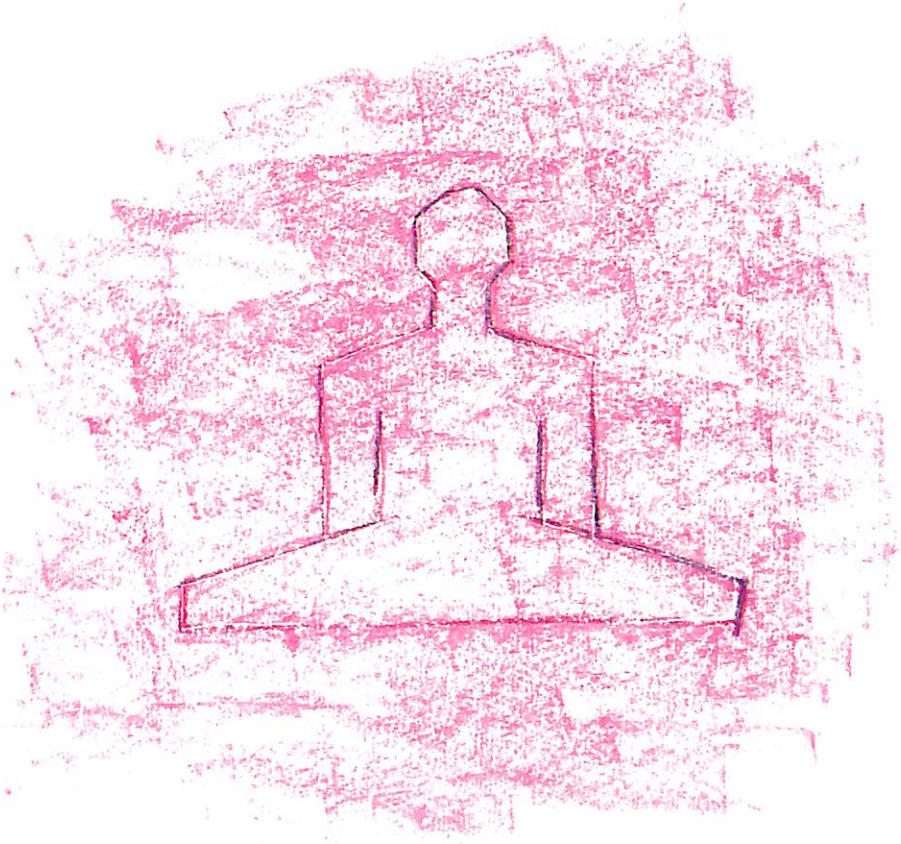


11 January 1996

During the evening meditation, while reciting the invocation to the *Guru*, I see him enveloped in translucent, rose pink mist.

15 January 1996

5 am: Today is the first day since I started the course in meditation that there is no activity in the body and mind. It feels odd. Perhaps the body and mind are being given a period of adjustment so that the nerves, unaccustomed to such rapid refinement and tuning that have been imposed upon them, can rest. Looking back, I realize that I was living in a state of total unawareness, taking for granted the new state of activity. When the rest period came, I realized what I had been missing – the calm and the peace.



16 January 1996

During a breathing exercise, I identify with the Cosmic Consciousness. I see invisible hands doing my *aarti*.

After having a break of a day with total rest to the nerves, the activity of the *Prana* in the body starts again.

Santosh is to be commended for having the courage to put this experience down as honestly as she has. It can be misunderstood as egoism. However, when one has merged with the chosen deity or the universal field, it is the *atman*, not the ego, that receives its portion of worship. Since the religious beliefs of the Hindus hold that there is no difference between the *atman* and the supreme soul, this is actually a non-issue from the Indian cultural viewpoint.

16 January 1996

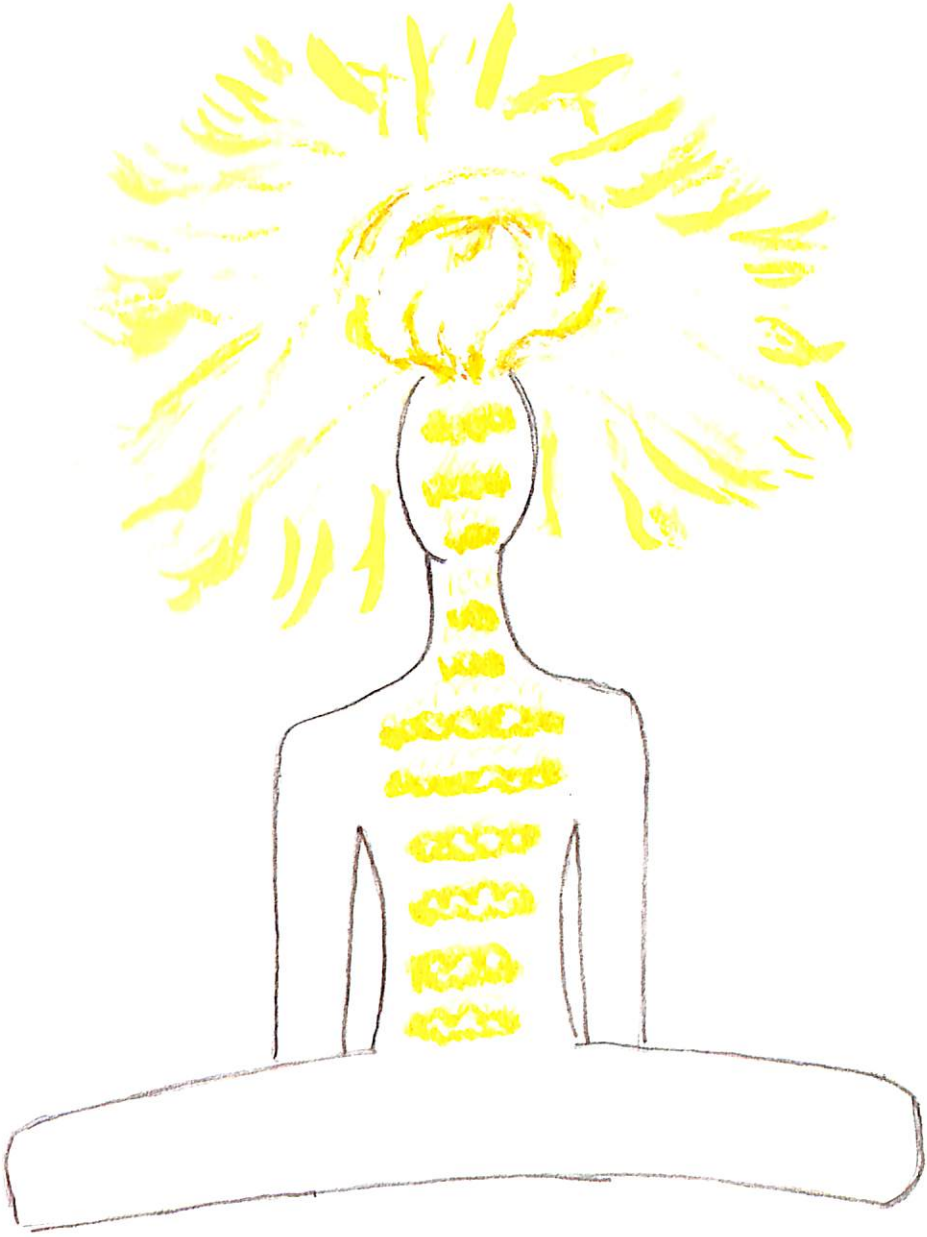
During meditation, a yellow-coloured, toothed disc moves from the base of the body upward and forms a globe on top of the head like a dome. It is a beautiful experience. All the *chakras* are fully active and radiant. There is a bright, white aura and there are no flames this time.

"(The Crown Chakra)... It is at first a depression in the etheric body... but when the man realizes his position as a king of the divine light, dispensing largesse to all around him, this chakra reverses itself, turning as it were inside out; it is no longer a channel of reception but of radiation, no longer a depression but a prominence, standing out from the head as a dome, a veritable crown of glory."

– *Leadbeater – 'The Chakras: A Monograph', op. cit., pp. 14-15.*

17 January 1996

4:45 am: This time, I start travelling above the stars till I reach the end. I pause for some time, and then there is a feeling of returning although there are no stars on the way back. When I come back, I feel as if I am receiving and absorbing – though what, I do not know!



17 January 1996

During the usual meditation time, I find myself travelling in darkness. As I ask my *Guru* for light, I see that I am going through a dark tunnel. As I move in the dark tunnel, I see that the walls of the passage I leave behind are tinged with golden light. I always travel at full speed through such tunnels. I move like a rocket that has a set course. I am not so much a body but, rather, a movement.

"When we throw this light of the mind behind us upon the path we have ascended we are looking into the region of memory. The light illuminates just a little arc of the great road behind which stretches right back through many lives, and constitutes the whole of our subconscious self."

– *Codd, op. cit., p. 19.*

The rest cannot be described. Words are simply inadequate here. Gold liquid is being poured into me, with clouds of smoke rising on the inside.

Evening: I can feel powerful energy, active in my whole body, sending out vibrations or energy waves in all directions. They must be very strong because my dog, who is sitting by my side, begins to whine.

19 January 1996

I think that the visuals have now stopped or exhausted themselves.

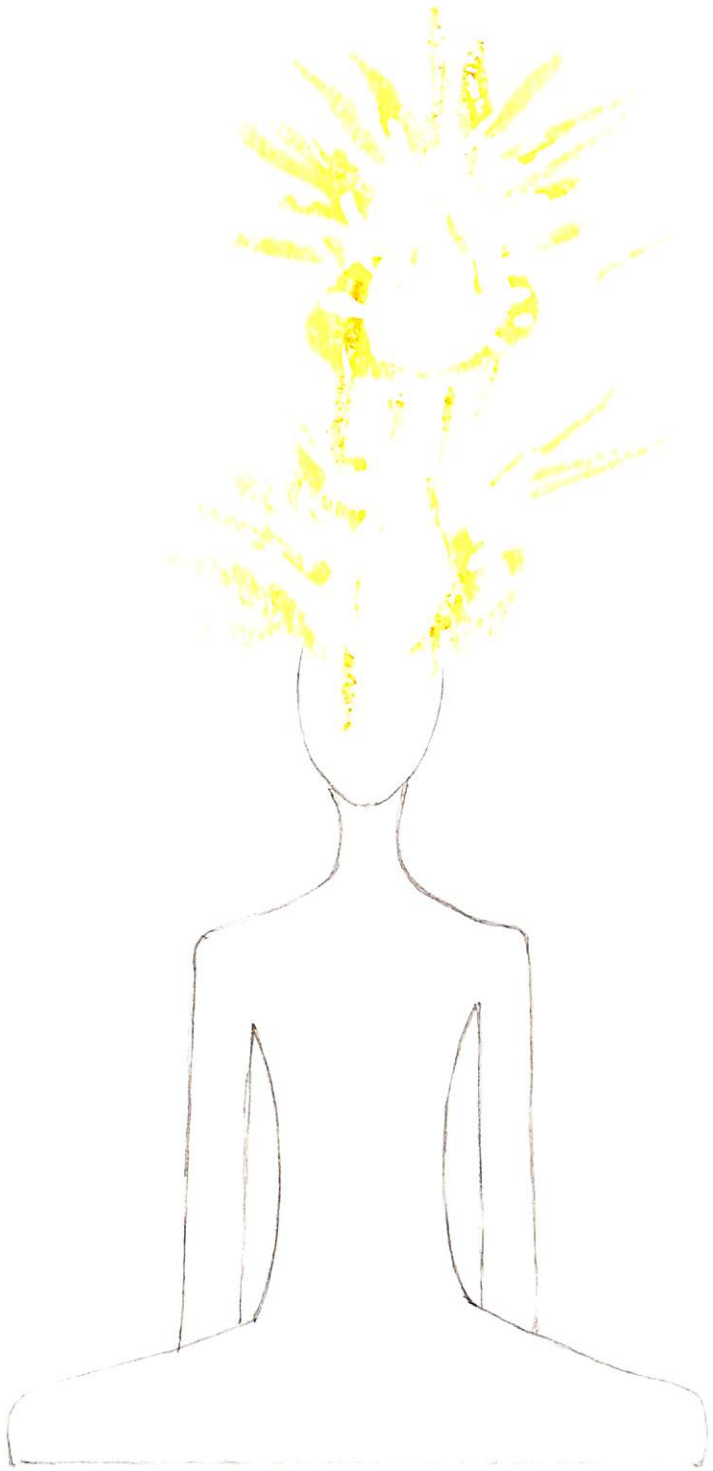
19 January 1996

I can feel a massive force or light in my body. I cannot contain it; I go through the motions of retching and throwing up. I think of my *Guru*, and I will the vibrations to move out of the body. After calming down, my body feels as if it has turned into a white flame, shaped like a round garlic pod.

This experience was a cleansing of some residual *karma*. The retching that she underwent seems to indicate that, as well as the fact that even when the light envelops her it is in the shape of a garlic pod, a well-known emetic and purifier of the blood. As usual, her vision has cast itself into a symbolic shape.

19 January 1996

A flame that isn't too bright comes down and enters my head. It starts to rotate very fast, throwing sparks.



19 January 1996

My head opens up and different shades of a gold-coloured liquid start flowing out in all directions. I'm beginning to wonder whether my imagination is working overtime. This, as I understand from the *Guru*, is an experience in expansion.

19 January 1996

During the evening meditation there is a river flowing within me, both upward and downward simultaneously. After some time, it is joined by rain pouring all over me in big drops.

This could perhaps be the feeling of having the rivers 'Varana' and 'Nasi', that bound the sacred city of Varanasi, flowing within the body. Varanasi is better known as Kashi, the sacred city of light, and is supposed to correspond to the highest of the seven *chakras* in the body. As the *Jabala Upanishad* puts it, "It is called 'Varana' because it obstructs (*varayati*) all sins of the senses and 'Nasi' because it destroys (*nashayati*) all sins of the senses."

The sacred city bound by these two rivers is supposed to be the meeting place of heaven and earth, and is physically placed between the nose and eyebrows. The rivers are streams of the *Ganga*, the sacred river that dissolves sin. The metaphor of cleansing continues with the raindrops.

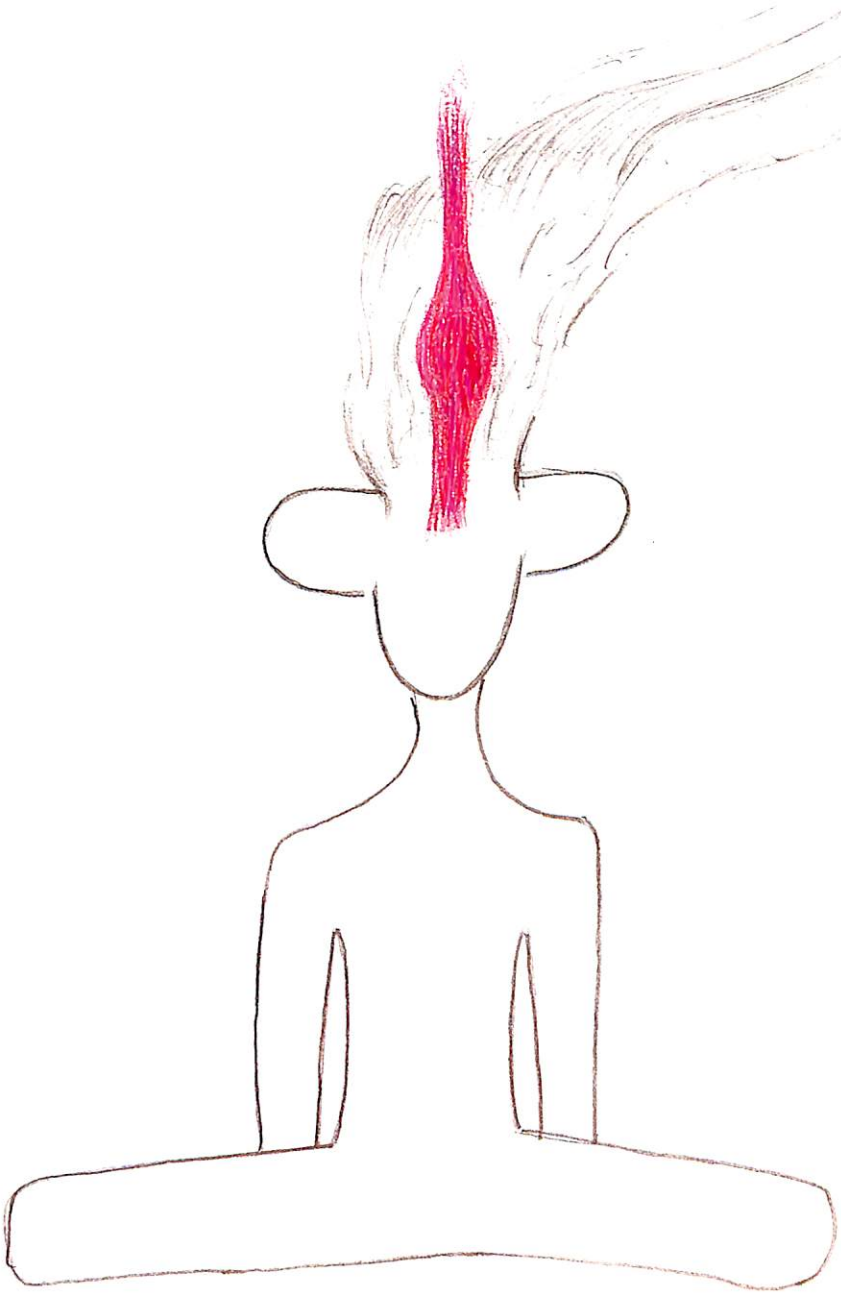
22 January 1996

7 pm: The meditation is quite peaceful. My head splits in the centre and a reddish pink light goes up. Then, something that looks like milk pours into the head. There is a feeling of the head closing and opening, closing and opening. In the opening I sense *Ganpati* – it is as if I feel his presence, rather than see him.

This gives me an insight into the symbolism of *sindhoor*, the vermilion-coloured powder that Indian women wear in the parting of their hair as a symbol of their married status. At the esoteric level, the vermilion light flashes when *Shakti* (energy) merges with *Shiva* at the *Sahasrar chakra*, or when the Individual Consciousness merges with the Cosmic Consciousness. The *sindhoor* is a constant visual reminder of that truth.

"The beautiful Kundali drinks the excellent red nectar issuing from Para-Siva, and returns from there where shines Eternal and Transcendent Bliss in all its glory along the path of Kula, and again enters the Muladhara... 'Stream of celestial nectar' (Divyamrtadhara) – This is the excellent nectar which, as has already been shown, is produced by the union of Siva and Sakti, and runs in a stream from the Brahma-randhra to the Muladhara. It is for this reason that the Author says in v. 3 that 'the Brahma-dvara which shines in Her mouth is the entrance to the place sprinkled by ambrosia.'"

– Woodroffe, *op. cit.*, pp. 474, 476.



Chapter Three

JOURNEY WITHOUT DISTANCE

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the Milky Way,
They stretch'd in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The Daffodils
– William Wordsworth

Suddenly, I seem to have lost all interest in the visuals I have been sketching. I feel sad because, although confusing at times, it has been the happiest phase in my life so far. I would like to document the experience in a more objective way, perhaps as a subject for study. I must strive to understand it. The thought suddenly arises: "I don't know why I am into this." There seems to be no goal in sight. I feel like a lost soul. On the other hand, there is a part of me that knows exactly what is taking place and its true purpose. The strange and the divine seem to be taking place simultaneously.

The *sadhana* of my previous lives has made this life much more interesting. I also understand my nature better now. For instance, I have always been uncomfortable in crowds. I can't make small talk and, if there are others to do the talking, I don't talk at all. If I am placed in a group, I can be by myself.

I now start on a new road to self-discovery. The physical body has to be further adjusted and tuned, simultaneously opening gates to a new adventure.

23 January 1996

Group meditation at the Guru's residence: I can see a pink haze coming from the *Guru* towards me, surrounding me and then encompassing the room.

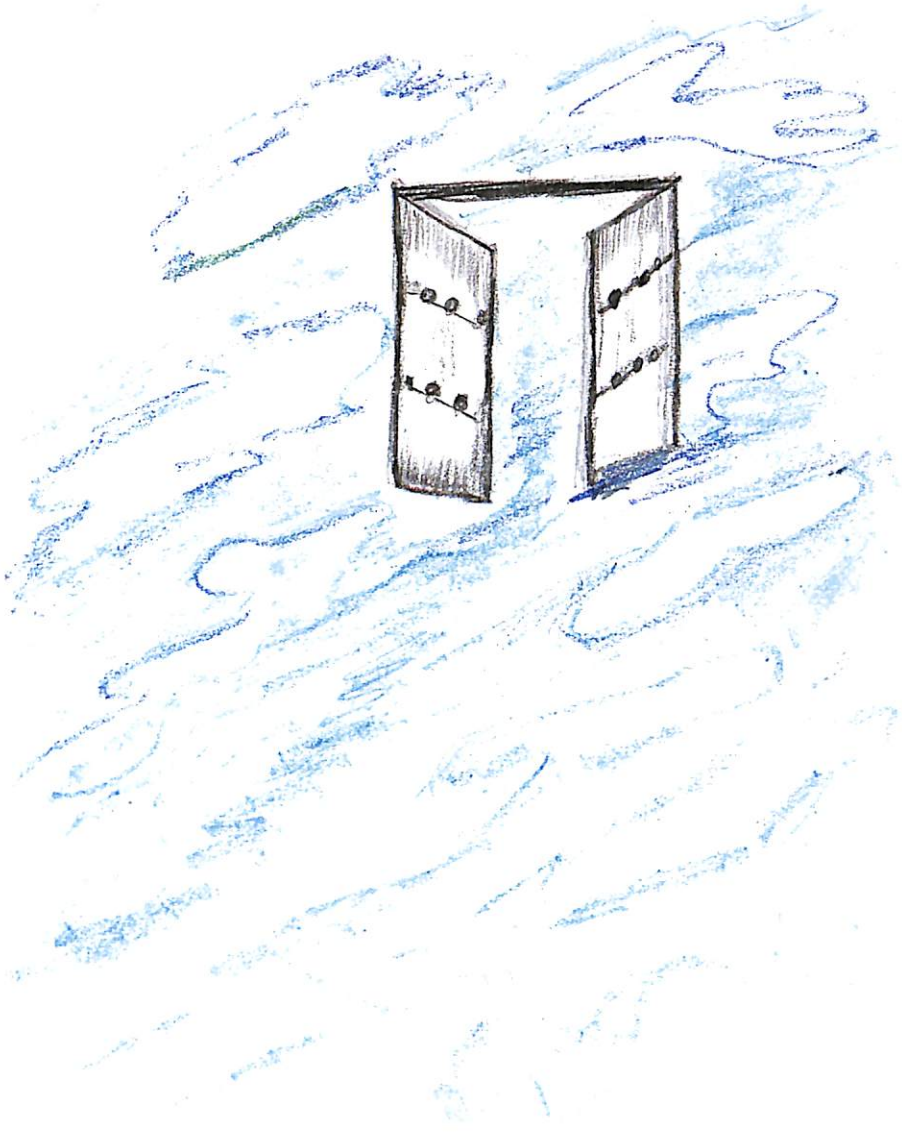
"A man in robust health usually absorbs and specializes so much more of this vitality than is actually needed by his own body that he is constantly radiating a torrent of rose-coloured atoms..."

– Leadbeater – 'The Chakras: A Monograph', op. cit., p. 56.

24 January 1996

I am moving through a blue sky scattered with white clouds. There is no pathway; just a wide expanse of this cloudy blue sky. I reach two big doors that open on my arrival. I say "Thank you" and come out on the other side. The process of the doors swinging open and shut goes on for some time. For me, when a *chakra* is developed, it is represented by open doors.

The open doors represent thresholds of awareness. Santosh states that this visual is how the development of a *chakra* registers for her as well. It is as if she is being provided with signposts at every stage in her evolution.



25 January 1996

After going through a period of confusion, I feel as if wisdom is dawning upon me this morning. Suddenly, I seem to understand or, rather, put a meaning to my visuals and to the line "The riddle of the universe is about me; I am now solving it."*

I think I have been given the gift to see my innermost thoughts and impulses. Some people have the ability to put down their thoughts in words; I am able to illustrate them symbolically. I believe that, as John Keats said, "Nothing ever becomes real till it is experienced – even a proverb is no proverb to you till your life has illustrated it." So, I have been illustrating the most indescribable experience of awakening and spiritual transformation, bringing it into conscious awareness through these lucid visuals. I am full of joy; I could give my *Guru* a big hug for making this miracle possible.

During meditation, I can feel the energy rising from the base of the spine and slowly travelling upward. I can pinpoint its exact movements. Then it gradually travels down and settles at the base. The earlier obsession to observe and absorb the process of unfoldment seems to be returning.

*Ramanathan, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

26 January 1996

Today, for the first time, I feel the *chakra*s located in the palms beginning to move. Streaks of yellow light go up from the body. I understand that the physical body is vibration.

"Invisibly from its surface, atoms and molecules radiate all the time, being replaced by others from the surrounding atmosphere. Picture this state of flux, and that there is no line of demarcation between our body and its surroundings."
– *Codd, op. cit., pp. 7-8.*

2 February 1996

Night: While lying in bed, I see my astral body lying next to me – I on my left side and my astral body on its right. When I turn on my back, my astral body turns on its back too. I can only see the shoulders, head and face. My astral form is exactly like me – except that the face is young and lovely.

5 February 1996

2 am: The *Kundalini* moves with considerable force at the base of my spine, as if some external agency has given it a jerk. It seems as if someone has touched my lower waist with both hands. I experience an uncomfortable sensation and a jerk. It is dark but, at that moment with the jerk, it seems as if it is early morning when the sun is about to rise.

6 February 1996

Slept peacefully last night. This is a departure from my usual highly-charged vibratory state that brings only restlessness at night. There would be a zinging sensation in my head and I would use high pillows, hoping that this would hamper the upward flow of the energy.

Group meditation at the Guru's residence: Today, for the first time, I let go completely and was not looking for anything. There was a sense of relief and freedom. I let myself go with the Master Mind.

There is a clear river flowing within me. After that, a playful fountain starts spurting up from within me, bringing with it the feeling of real joy...

6 February 1996 (Contd.)

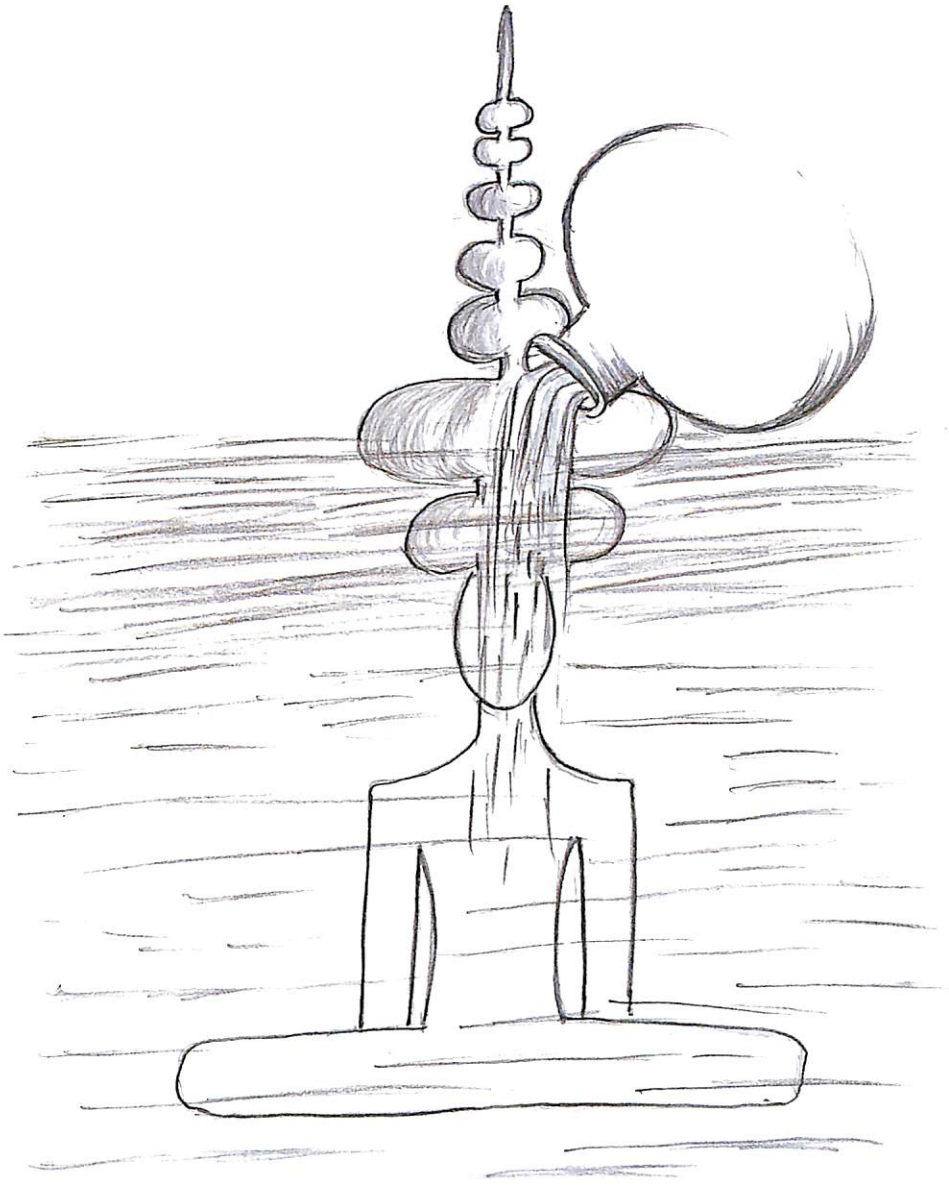
...Then, I seem to turn into a dome of a temple. A copper-coloured liquid starts falling all over me. I get submerged in water. Gradually, I start becoming water from the bottom up, until I become all water. I begin to flow like a river, and slowly gain momentum. Even as a river, I am running to get somewhere. Being and becoming water gives me a most blissful feeling. *Guruji* says, "It's an experience of expansion."

Even though she refers to a dome of a temple, from the visual we get the irresistible feeling of an alchemical retort. That water is a transformatory power is a sound belief; not only does life originate in water but also new life, in spiritual terms. This explains the primary, even exaggerated, importance of the ritual purificatory bath in the Hindu belief system.

7 February 1996

Lying down after the exercises, I see a bowl of white flames coming from space, entering the head and travelling right down into the abdomen. As I look at it, any flame that comes from outside and enters the body clears the channels for the movement of energy.

Somehow, I feel that my *Guru* is keeping me on the right path, guiding and steering me away from the by-lanes. These experiences are so fascinating that, left to me, I would remain in them – especially the one where the Self identifies with the Cosmic Consciousness. There are times when I am flowing like a river. I would like to be in that continuous state of joyful bubbling and flowing. Sometimes, I am just an expanse of space with birds flying within me. These experiences are so fascinating and enjoyable that if, for some reason, I got stuck in one of these states I would be thought of as a woman who has lost her mind. I would definitely sound crazy to anyone who heard me say, "I was a mug of water" or "I was a paint brush."



7 February 1996

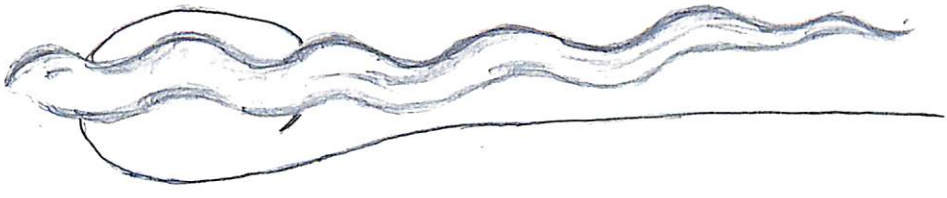
There would be no way for someone to comprehend the mystery of the Consciousness identifying with whatever it fancies. This identification is not a conscious effort; it just happens. 'Bliss' is the impersonal and natural state of Consciousness or Source. Consciousness identifies itself with an object, place or thing and having experienced the bliss of it, moves onto the next identification without getting enmeshed in it. It is self-creating and self-experiencing. If it somehow gets identified with a dense *karmic* embodiment of its creation, then the process of step-by-step self-discovery starts. If I were to see a mad man who was stuck on being a horse, I would know now that what was amiss was that he did not have a *Guru*. It is by the grace of the *Guru* that I have not got attached to the different dimensions of Consciousness or become a mental case. I have taken each experience as a conscious experience in Consciousness.

8 February 1996

Lying down after the exercises and watching my breath, I become aware of a long, thick, creamy, grey-coloured snake moving inside my body towards my head and then going out of it. Streaks of fast-moving energy start entering my head. The movement of the snake is not its usual crawl but more like a wave, or what is known as the agitated 'concertina motion' in herpetology.

Evening: I feel something knocking in my chest cavity.

The snake symbolizes rebirth as well as the process of sloughing off the old. By moving through her body and exiting through her head, there is a symbolic acknowledgement of having come to terms with some old issues or *karmas*. They are set free now, even as she herself is freed of having to carry them.



9 February 1996

Lying down after meditation, I feel as if the abdomen is expanding. I see streaks of energy-cum-light flowing backward from my head up to the sky, into a shining hole. Then, the hole starts pouring the same back onto me. It overturns and becomes a flat board of light – like the base of a clothes iron – and goes over me.

10 February 1996

Lying down after the exercises and watching my breath, I feel as though I am pumping my abdomen which is like the glowing mouth of a *tandoor* (an open clay oven). This glow emanates from my own body. With each pumping motion, earth and rubble are going in. It fills up, I become a smooth path and start moving – going away from myself and coming back. Then what looks like a syringe or pen with a shiny rotating point, comes down. It moves on the surface of my body. I'm waiting for it to find its point. I think it enters a spot between my eyebrows. I feel as though I am water; I don't feel that I am earth. (I realize now that when I felt that I was water, my consciousness had identified with water, whereas, when I experienced the earth movement, I was probably witnessing the earth energy in motion.) After the light enters the forehead, I see a big hole in the sky with clouds as its walls.

Evening: While lying down I see rocks falling, dust flying and the earth heaving and moving. Then, I see rocks falling from the sky. This phenomenon is repeated time and again, until I realize that it is a past life experience.

Note: Past life experiences always come from the *Manipur chakra*.

12 February 1996

I meet my *Guru* in the evening and go through the diary of visuals with him. It feels good to be with him. When I tell him about my desire to develop the diary into a full-fledged book, he advises me to wait.

13 February 1996

Lying down after the exercises, I see a cloud come down that starts to pour rain. It is more like a sprinkling, but only from the shoulders upward. Then there is an expansive feeling of a solid mass heaving. I know it is my abdomen. I became aware of a fragrance. At first, I think it is camphor but it gets stronger and quite definite, and then fades away. I feel that my body is lying at an angle i.e. the head is at a higher level than the feet. I realize that it is the etheric body that is slanted.

Group meditation at the Guru's residence: I see *Guruji* in water, with water around him and the moonlight shining all over. The water turns into waves and splashes over me. The waves recede, and now there is pink light over the water. Suddenly, round, grey-coloured rocks start falling over me. I'm in the void at first and then underground, identifying with the earth energy. I move but am aware of the earth over me. I see the *Guru* as a mound of white and yellow flowers.

14 February 1996

I start moving in space till I am in a sky full of innumerable stars. I seem to go beyond the stars where there is only darkness. I keep going through darkness for quite some time. I come out into the dawn. Then, it appears as if it is dusk. Stars seem to be flitting by, suddenly coming out of nowhere, dashing across and disappearing. I am probably travelling through different time zones and different galaxies. I am moving at tremendous speed and reach another vibratory level where celestial beings made of light reside.

My whole focus seems to be centred on the abdominal region, probably around the *Manipur chakra* and the spleen. I notice that my past life experiences are coming from this centre and also that my astral travels are taking place from here.

Today it feels as if the body is at a slant, with the head being lower than the feet. As the abdomen moves up and down, I can hear my fingers scraping against each other like sandpaper.

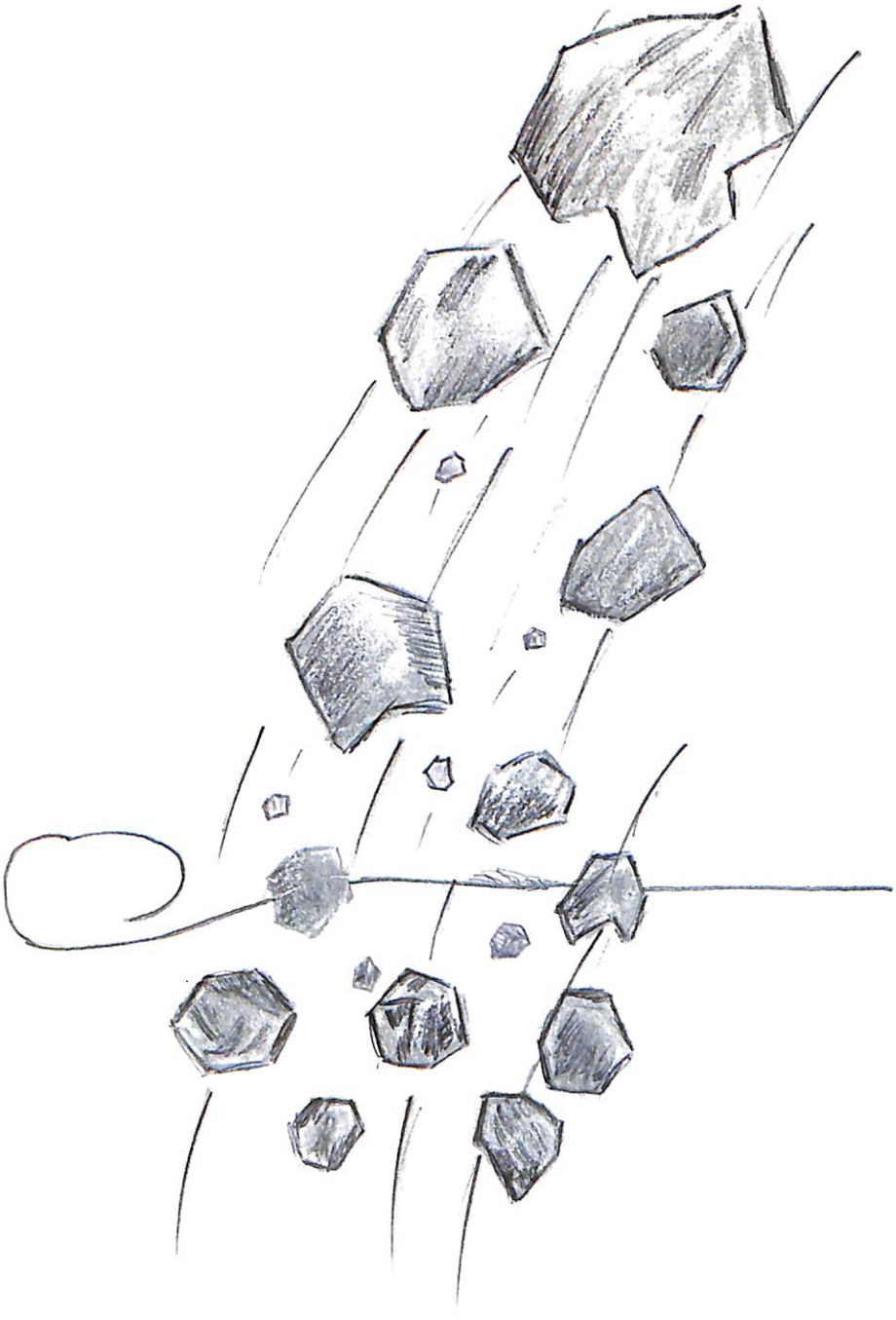
Evening: While meditating, I see myself walking through a golden palace with high ceilings and arches...

14 February 1996 (Contd.)

...Then, once again, I see the rocks coming down with rubble and dust. There are big boulders pulling themselves out and falling. The earth throws itself up.

The falling boulders may have been a past life experience, but they distinctly continue the tenor of this chapter where old experiences and regrets are finally let go after having been assimilated. The resemblance to the Tarot Trump, The Tower, is rather obvious. This is the card in the Major Arcana of the Tarot that deals with the breaking down and levelling of the old in a rather dramatic and sometimes frightening fashion, so that space for the new may naturally arise out of the consequences of one's *karma*.

I travel beyond the stars to yet another galaxy of stars, wait, and come back. I see a male figure dressed in black and white, taking a dance step. Next, I see a hazy, sepia-toned crowd of people riding horses or walking. There is a slight discomfort in my head as if someone is pushing a finger against it.



15 February 1996

I seem to have travelled endlessly. Initially, there is a delicate whiff of some fragrance. I feel as if I am rising higher and higher. There are numerous distant stars. I go beyond and wait in darkness, then come into an area where it is neither day nor night – just a dull glow of twilight. I cross further, and there is a vast expanse of thick energy. At every level, I try to absorb whatever I'm supposed to absorb. I could keep going on further, but am not sure whether my head can take it. So, I let the invisible Guide (for I feel there has to be one) know that I would like to go back now. I come back into the light once again. The return is easier. I can hear my breathing.

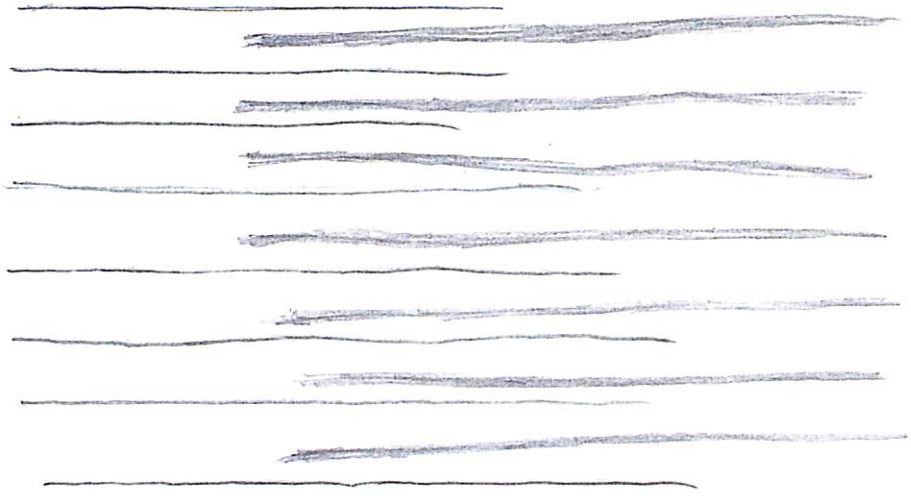
I realize that now when I use the term "I" – it denotes my consciousness and not my gross body.

16 February 1996

There is a feeling of light all around. I am in an area where there are cross-currents of energy flowing. The currents coming from the left are thinner in density than those coming from the right and moving towards the left. Then, it seems as if I am moving in any random direction. This is until I catch the rhythm of the currents sometimes towards the left, tracing my way back, and then moving to the right. In line with my head are occasional flashes of light which make me blink. As the meditation ends, I see a heaving surface which is glowing as if some light is falling on it. It could be my abdomen. Time-wise, it seems as though I achieve (though I don't know what) much more there than I would have during the same time on earth.

18 February 1996

During meditation, I can hear the sound of my breath. I realize that the sound is coming from the abdomen and then it shifts into the chest. There is a curious sensation in the head from the neck upward; a sensation of my whole body turning from within – almost like a body within the body! It is making an attempt to get out of the outer body. I feel a little pressure in the head, just above the forehead, as if someone is pressing it. Then I am out and see the full length of my astral body, stretched over and above my gross body, facing each other.



19 February 1996

I am lying down with my hands on my abdomen and feel like I am not breathing at all. Everything in my body is at peace. The only feeling is as though a section of myself is in motion. Occasionally, a shadow passes over me. I feel as if the bed is being gently nudged and think it must be my head. Then, the realization dawns that it is the energy that is moving.

Evening: Lying down and continuing the meditation, I feel the energy field coming heavily down on me and embracing me. I also feel a magnetic pull at my head, as if it is being pulled up (I probably manage to move out and come back). After some time, I feel lighter and the energy starts flowing in through my head. My breathing is imperceptible.

20 February 1996

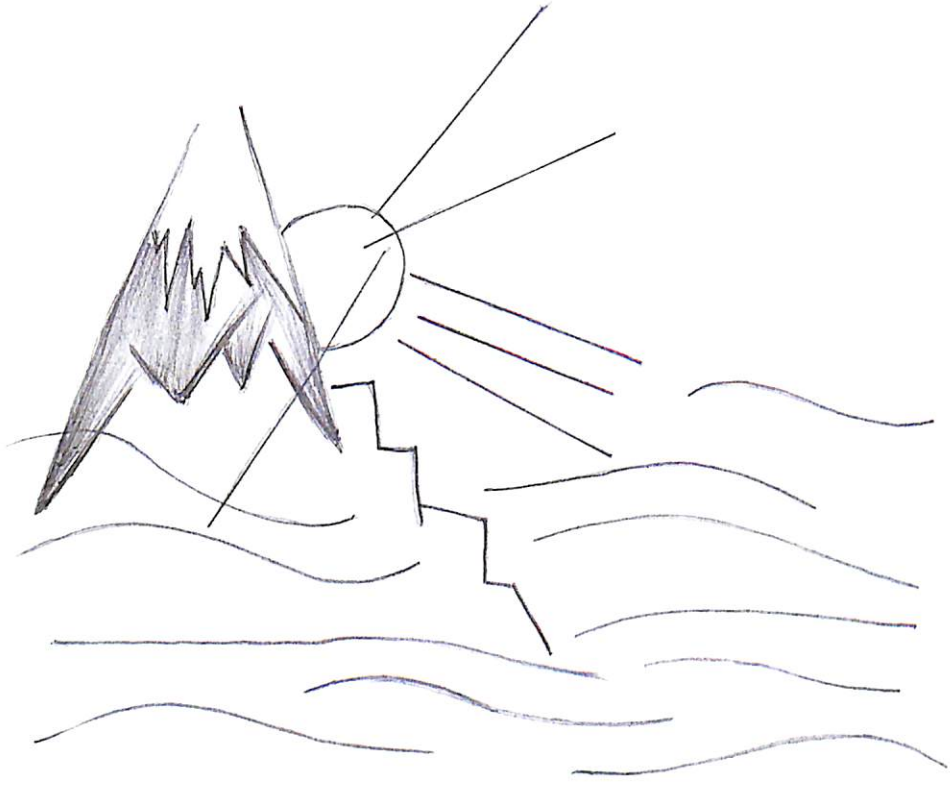
Group meditation at the Guru's residence: The pendulum on the right side of my head, above the temple, is hyperactive. It gives me a slight headache. I see the glowing *chakra*s working in the *Guru*'s body – or are they in front of it? Energy in the form of white flames goes out from my left hand towards the *Guru*.

At night, I dream that I am lying on my stomach and the *Guru* applies pressure to a point on the right side of my spine between the waist and the shoulder blade. There is a *chakra* there that probably got activated.

21 February 1996

Lying down after the exercises, with imperceptible breathing, there is a whiff of a fragrance. I feel that my whole body is made of light. At first, it starts to grow length-wise from my feet, balloons upward, and then from the head, giving a great sense of expansion. A bright sun is shining from behind the peak of a snowy mountain.

Evening: The meditation starts with the *chakra*s going out of control, leaving me choked. As I think of the *Guru*, everything immediately calms down and I feel at ease. I think this is the meditation that has given me the most joy and love. I am engulfed in rose pink atoms; my whole room is filled with this. Every pore of my body seems to be full of joy.



"Gurur Brahma, Gurur Vishnu,
Gurur Devo Maheshwara.
Gurur Sakshat Parabrahma,
Tasmai Shri Gurave Namah."

The Guru is Brahma, the Guru is Vishnu,
The Guru is the Lord Shiva.
The Guru is the Supreme Reality,
I bow in reverence to that Guru.

22 February 1996

My flight is glorious. It starts with my abdomen flowing like a liquid mass. Then, I start rising higher and higher till I am above the stars. I come into an area that is lit up. I come back and go out of the head. I am a bird soaring and gliding higher and higher in space. There is some discomfort in the left foot. This is my first sense of complete freedom. It seems that I can now smoothly move in and out of the body without any discomfort, except for a little when I am moving back in.

I return as streaks of light and energy at full speed, entering my body through the feet and then, at the same speed, come out and go through the navel. I have to keep blinking due to the glare of the light in my eyes.

"You gently feel as if you glide on a very smooth surface; as if you enter smoothly, gently through a small hole of fine tube with an airy, light body. You have an airy, ethereal feeling. Just as air enters through the crevices of a window, you enter with the new astral body into the physical body."

– Sivananda, Swami – 'Concentration and Meditation'. The Divine Life Society, U.P., India. Eighth Edition, 1990, p. 310.

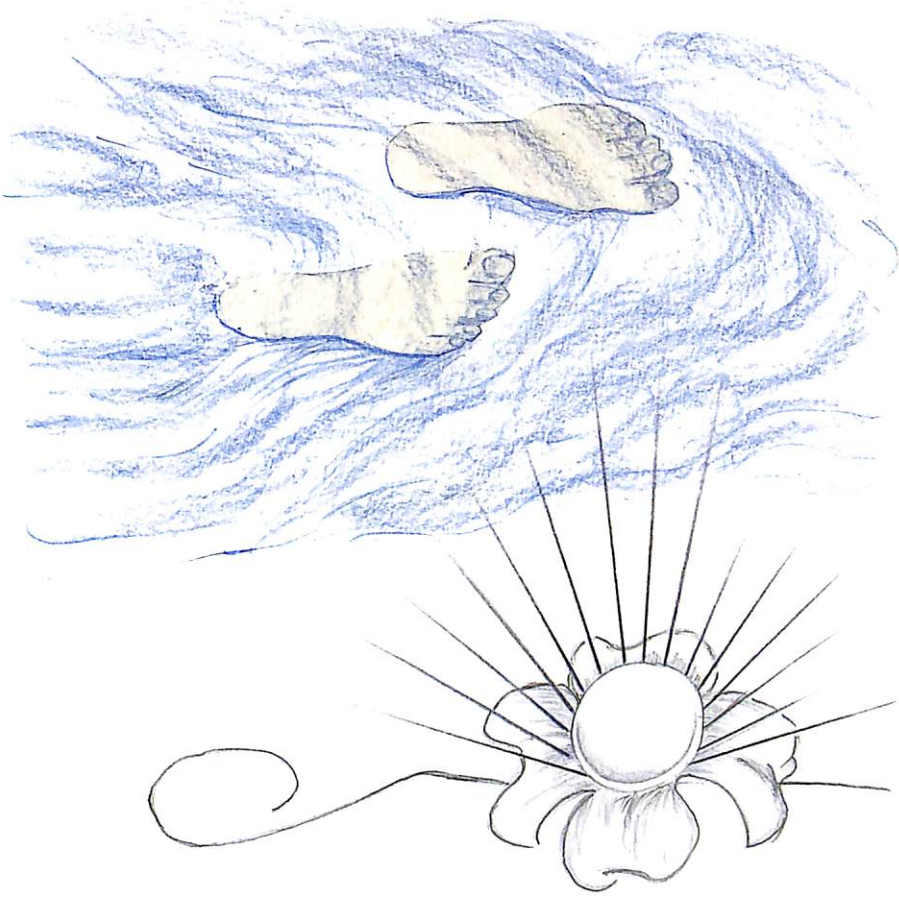
Evening: Everything during the meditation is in slow motion. My abdomen feels as if it is throwing up clouds of snowballs that come back down. Then, there is a feeling of something coming down and aligning itself over my body. I begin expanding length-wise. There is a sensation of my feet being pulled. My abdomen starts blowing up like a balloon until I become a big hollow ball and start rotating among the stars. I come down next to the level of my head and start rotating there. I state that I wish to end my meditation, since I am not sure whether it is polite to simply get away; it is like going to someone's house and slipping away without acknowledging the host's hospitality.

23 February 1996

I am lying down with my hands resting on my abdomen, watching my breath. I feel that the navel opens up and unfolds like a big flower, in the centre of which is a big ball of white light throwing up rays of light. Then, I move out in the form of a shapeless, transparent jelly. I can see my feet walking on the surface of the water. After doing a breathing exercise and during the recitation of the affirmation, the force that comes to me is like a solid physical mass – more like a wall. It chokes me.

This is intriguing because Indian mythology has a unique element of a lotus emerging from *Vishnu's* navel (hence his name *Padmanabha*, the Lotus-navelled) upon which sits *Brahma*, the Creator. This famous artistic representation seems to have been based on what actually happens to the *chakras*, rather than on any flights of artistic fancy. That *Vishnu* sleeps and walks on the waters of the cosmic ocean puts Santosh's experience into an even deeper perspective.

Evening: I go on one of my astral travels. This is very interesting for me. I realize that there is another vibratory level that is exactly like ours. The people are like us, with our structure. There are houses and trees. The only difference is that these beings do not have a gross body. I see children playing. There is a man on crutches with one leg, fighting with another man. There is a girl sitting in the open under a tree, the breeze flapping the pages of the book she is reading. There are some girls talking in a room. Then, I'm in a classroom. My back is towards me. I suddenly realize that I'm actually not there; it is my astral body that has travelled there.



24 February 1996

After the exercises, I experience an uncomfortable sensation in my left toe. While lying down, I can feel a gravitational pull there. A pencil light approaches and enters a point at the heart. I go very high up in the sky, into the void. Then, it seems as if the heavens are falling on me but I realize that I am reaching that level. This movement is not controlled or monitored. It is a sudden rise and a sudden, quick fall. A glow starts in my body and travels towards my head, which begins to feel heavy. I can't contain it. I open my eyes and see my mother sitting for her meditation behind me. I relax and send my love to her. The whistling is still going on in my ears.

26 February 1996

I see usual visions of the heaving earth, flowing water and an inky blue sky. Then, I rush through a tunnel with its walls made of green and white streaks. There is a vague awareness of two birds sitting in a tree. I cover my eyes since the daylight seems too strong, even through closed eyelids.

Evening: I see the back of a girl wearing trousers, walking away from me. Then, I see some odd-looking faces – one of them pokes its tongue out at me.

"Sometimes, these elementals appear during meditation. They are strange figures, some with long teeth, some with big faces, some with big bellies, some with faces on the belly, some with faces on the head. They are inhabitants of the Bhuta Loka. They are Bhutas. They are supposed to be the attendants of Lord Siva. They have terrifying forms. They do not cause any harm at all. They simply appear on the stage. They come to test your strength and courage. They can do nothing. They cannot stand before a pure, ethical aspirant. Repetition of a few Omkaras will throw them at a distance. You must be fearless."

– *Sivananda, ibid., p. 322.*

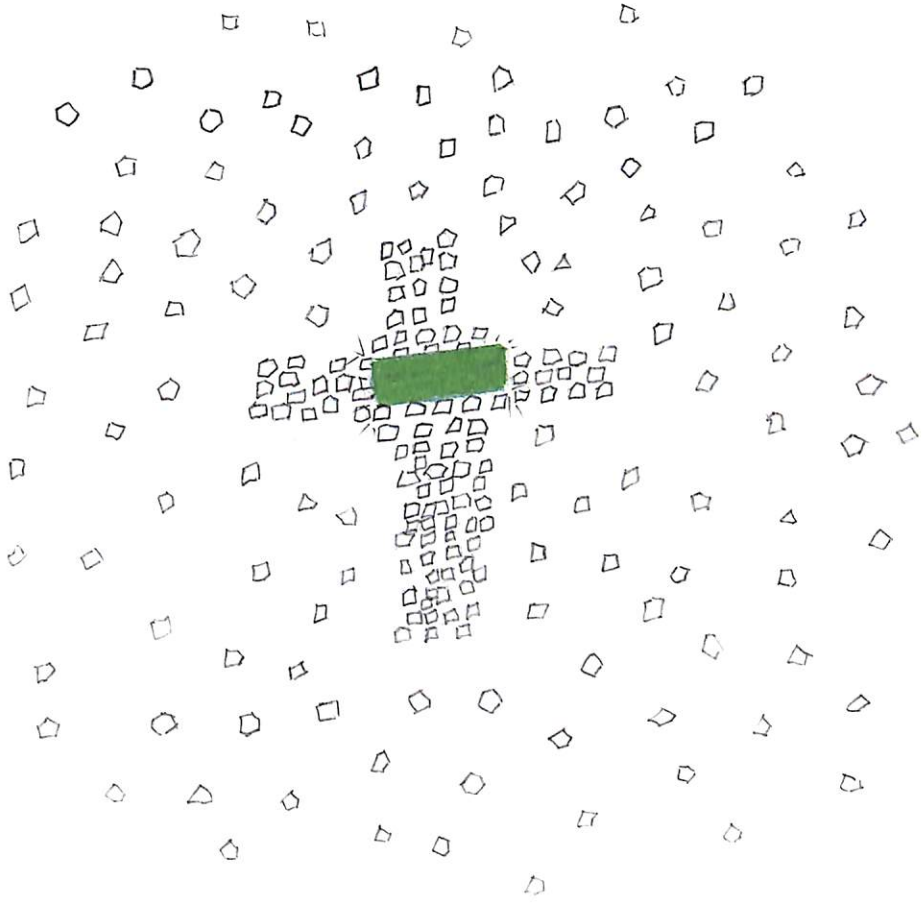
26 February 1996

Lying down, I see what looks like a cross of diamonds with an emerald in the centre, coming down at the forehead. Then, it appears as though the emerald and diamonds are moving in tandem until they spread out and become a great expanse filled with tiny diamonds. I am floating far above this surface. I state that I'm going back. Then, I see dark gems – I think the colour is of dark rubies – spread out in space.

Leadbeater has described the island of gems located in the secondary heart lotus, visualizations of which are used to maintain constant contact with the Master.*

This visual is rather unusual and atypical in the general stream of visions that Santosh has been having. It is overlain with many levels of significance, not least of which is the fact that the cross, symbol of eternity crossing infinity, is made of diamonds. Diamonds symbolize light, joy, innocence and life. They are an aspect of pure Truth; brilliant and hard, uncompromising in their reality and unconquerable in their evolution. Interestingly, there is an emerald at the still centre of this unyielding vision of Truth. Emeralds are a form of beryl, much milder in outlook and more forgiving. They stand for tranquility, balancing forces (especially of the emotions), healing and love. They are supposed to influence the *Anahat chakra*, as Leadbeater confirms, and the solar plexus – in both, activating them as well as keeping them in harmony. The emerald is placed in the centre to soften what would have been a too magnificently austere version of Truth. Once the Truth enters through the forehead, the purpose of the emerald is to ensure its acceptance. That accomplished, the newly gained insight can be scattered to the outside universe, which is exactly what happens. This is an archetypal vision.

*Leadbeater – *'The Chakras: A Monograph'*, *op. cit.*, *pp. 112-114.*



27 February 1996

While lying down and meditating, I feel the descending energy coming down on me till my gross body is flattened out like a board. I move out of the body and I go off to a place where there is bright moonlight and innumerable stars shining. Then, I seem to go beyond this scene only to come back and poise myself above my forehead as a ray of light and encircle my body. The *chakra* above the right temple starts working.

Moving out of the body is a new experience for me. I feel I am just experimenting and trying out different exit and entry points.

1 March 1996

12:30 am – Shaktipat: Dreaming while only half-asleep is a powerful experience. I am outside *Swami* Rama's study in Delhi, listening to *Swamiji* playing his *sitar* inside. I can hear a bird chirping. Something inside me starts fluttering. Suddenly, without any warning, there is a loud sound like a thunderclap. My body is blown to smithereens, disintegrating completely. I am out of the body that is left feeling totally lifeless and breathless. For weeks after this experience, I would hear a loud burst like a firecracker, going off in the head. It would happen at unexpected times, like when I was lying in bed reading. *Guruji* tells me that it represents the destruction of my past *karmas*. At some point, this curious sound stopped of its own accord.

"...there are only two ways of hammering the Kundalini. And the third way is an extraordinary way - the way of shaktipat, or transmission of energy. This is an astral way, and it needs a medium, a vehicle... You can be your own medium, but initially it can be dangerous. The shaktipat, the fallout of energy, can be so powerful that you may not withstand it. It is just possible that some delicate senses of your body are jammed or they break down... The medium of another person serves as an instrument regulating the energy in its relation with your capacity to withstand it... No one can do shaktipat, but someone's presence can catalyse it, cause it to happen."

– Osho – 'Kundalini Yoga: In Search Of The Miraculous – Volume 1'. Sterling Publishers Private Limited, New Delhi, India, 1997, pp. 151-152.

The Tarot Trump, the Tower, is represented here again. This is a truly archetypal figure, crackling with raw energy. It is all the more unusual as Santosh has had no formal training in art and does not know how to 'create effects'.

Chapter Four

MOVING INTO STILLNESS

Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,
This pilot is guiding me,
Lured by the love of the genii that move
In the depths of the purple sea;
Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills,
Over the lakes and the plains,
Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,
The Spirit he loves remains;
And I all the while bask in Heaven's blue smile,
Whilst he is dissolving in rains.

The Cloud
– P. B. Shelley

I become aware of the *Kundalini* moving in the brain. To surrender totally at this stage becomes difficult but I am also aware that if I don't do so, considerable and permanent damage can be caused to the brain. I stop to get my thoughts and feelings together to examine them. Why the questioning now? Hadn't everything been taken care of, right down to the finest detail, so far? Even the heart, which is such a delicate organ, had been worked upon with the utmost care. At no stage was I left feeling abandoned as far as my health was concerned. On the contrary, my earlier problems of spondylitis, chronic sinus and hypertension had also been taken care of. So, where was this distrust and confusion coming from?

Looking back, I realize that the gross body had always been cared for when the transformations were taking place in my etheric self. Any activity that caused me discomfort was withdrawn immediately and was resumed only when I was completely relaxed and ready to cooperate. I came to the conclusion that I was in safe hands and could surrender completely in order that a total transformation take place. This allowed the *Kundalini* to work at her own pace, erasing old grooves and re-inscribing new ones over them; the sensation it gave was that of a master craftsman at work. At other times, it felt as if a part of the brain had been relocated or that certain shifts were conducted.

With the work being carried out on the brain came a phase of what I call 'becoming a statue'. The first time it happened, I was sitting for meditation with my eyes open. Though the awareness was total, there was no will. So, I had no choice but to sit still and wait for my limbs to start functioning once more – for my eyes to start seeing and my neck to start turning. I was like a statue at the Madam Tussaud's Museum in London. In due course I became used to this phenomenon and, on talking to *Guruji*, I came to know that this was a state of deep meditation. So, I stopped wondering and decided to relax and affirm that I was ready to learn whatever this state had to offer. I became open and receptive to it.

"My body became immovably rooted; breath was drawn out of my lungs as if by some huge magnet. Soul and mind instantly lost their physical bondage... The flesh was as though dead..."

– Yogananda, Paramahansa – 'Autobiography of A Yogi'. Self-Realization Fellowship, Los Angeles, California, 1959, p. 149.

These shifts, coupled with the erasing and re-inscribing of the grooves, also gave me greater clarity on what I had been experiencing. I became more sensitive to the fragrances and the *nada* sounds. I was more conscious and aware of my astral travels. I was heartened to realize that even here a Master or a Guide was always present, though mostly unseen by me. If I lingered on this plane for any undue reason or curiosity, I was admonished and asked to move on. I also gained a better insight into the creative role of the *chakras* and my past lives.

"There is one simple test whether the Sakti is actually aroused. When she is aroused intense heat is felt at that spot but when she leaves a particular centre the part so left becomes as cold and apparently lifeless as a corpse."

– Woodroffe, op. cit., p. 22.

A whole new phase started in meditation, where I went into sudden stillness. It was as if a switch was turned off. When awareness and consciousness returned, I found that my limbs were quite lifeless and I had to wait for the energy to start moving.

3 March 1996

5 am: While sleeping in the afternoon, I dream that I am sitting for meditation at the *Guru's* residence. A finger gives a big push to my left temple. I realize now that the finger projection is actually the energy pushing its way through the grooves of the brain. It's probably the density that causes the pain and discomfort. This activity in the brain somehow leads to the activation of the *Anahat chakra* and the intense sensation of ecstasy.

Suddenly, a big fan starts whirling very fast within me. I'm filled with ecstasy. I gasp in surprise enjoying the experience. The fan stops as suddenly as it started. The *chakra* is moving very fast – like a strong breeze; even my clothes flutter.

4 March 1996

Morning meditation: I have no idea what has happened. During the course of meditation I recite the affirmations. Suddenly, everything in me stops; there is stillness all over as if the whole universe has come to a standstill. The elemental body consciousness remains but *Chetna* (Consciousness) has left. Not being able to move the body can be very disconcerting. Although the mind stays with the body, it is not in control. I wonder if I'll even be able to move my limbs. It is as if an order has been issued. I try to think of my *ishta devata* (personal form of God) *Shiva*, my *Guru*, and my Guide when I can't get my brain cells to work. What am I to do in such a situation? I have no will. Words are inadequate to convey this experience – the ears stop hearing, the eyes stop seeing, the brain stops functioning and I cease breathing. It is as if I am completely switched off.

5 March 1996

While asleep in the afternoon, I dream that I am at the *Guru*'s residence telling him about yesterday's incident. In my dream, he tells me that it was an out-of-body experience!

I resolve to verify this with him and, when I meet him a few days later, he says that the experience was a state of deep meditation.

7 March 1996

Evening: There is a sensation of a thick, liquid-like outflow of energy starting from the base of the spine. At that moment, I can only think of letting it out without impediment. Something heavy starts rising in my body. I know it is the *Kundalini*. I think of my *Guru* and ask the Divine to guide me. I try to allow a smooth passage up to the top of my head. There must be a foolproof system to handle the *Kundalini*.

My body feels lifeless from the waist downward. It takes some time for the circulation to restart. I am not sure if my legs will support me. This is probably the aftermath of the energy rising up from the lower limbs and going out of the head. The meditation lasts for only about 25-30 minutes.

There is a flash of another incident from my past life. These flashes have probably become more pronounced after the experience of what I call '*Shaktipat*' on 1 March 1996.

I see myself as a woman wearing a white ballroom gown. I run down along an outdoor pathway that has a railing, towards a man wearing a hat and an overcoat with the collar drawn up. His hands are by his sides. As I reach him, he hands over a revolver to me which I hide in the folds of my dress. Then, I see myself as the same woman. However, this time I am in a pink dress and my hair, which is left loose, is light in colour.

I am acutely aware of the fact that whatever was left unfinished in that life has been completed in this one.

11 March 1996

Guruji's birthday: After the exercises, while lying down during meditation, I focus on my chest. The energy comes up to the chest and accumulates there for some time. Everything is at a standstill. I come out of it, once it is possible to do so, with an invocation to the *Guru* and by reciting: "I am neither the body nor the mind. I am the infinite and universal principle. I have no friend or foe. I have no pleasure or pain. I am the absolute, changeless, deathless, eternal and infinite Truth. I am above all pairs of opposites. Nothing can touch me. Nothing else exists. I am the All, the All is in me. I am That. I am That."*

Evening: The recitation stops suddenly as I go into deep meditation. The *chakras* in the head stop and I let the energy take its course. I get into meditation with the recitation of the affirmations. I am almost unaware of the recitations ceasing as I enter into deep meditation, at which stage I also lose awareness at times.

**Gnaneswarananda, Swami – 'Meditation: Monks of the Ramakrishna Order'. Sri Ramakrishna Math Printing Press, Mylapore, Madras, India. Eleventh Impression, p. 91.*

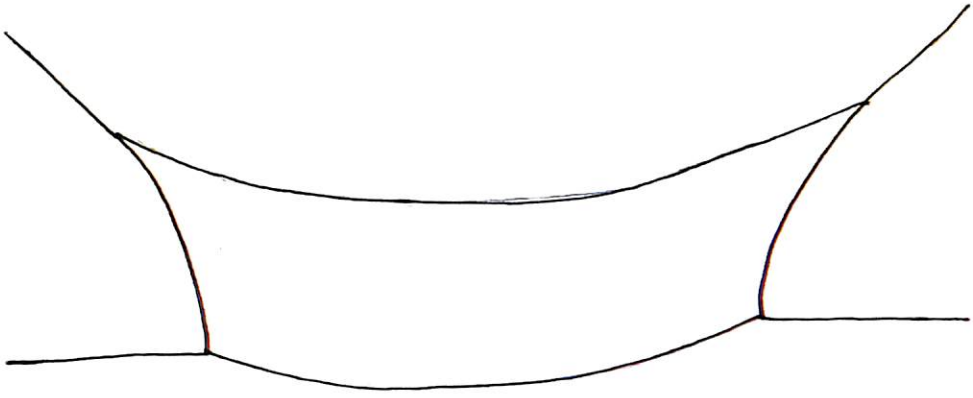
12 March 1996

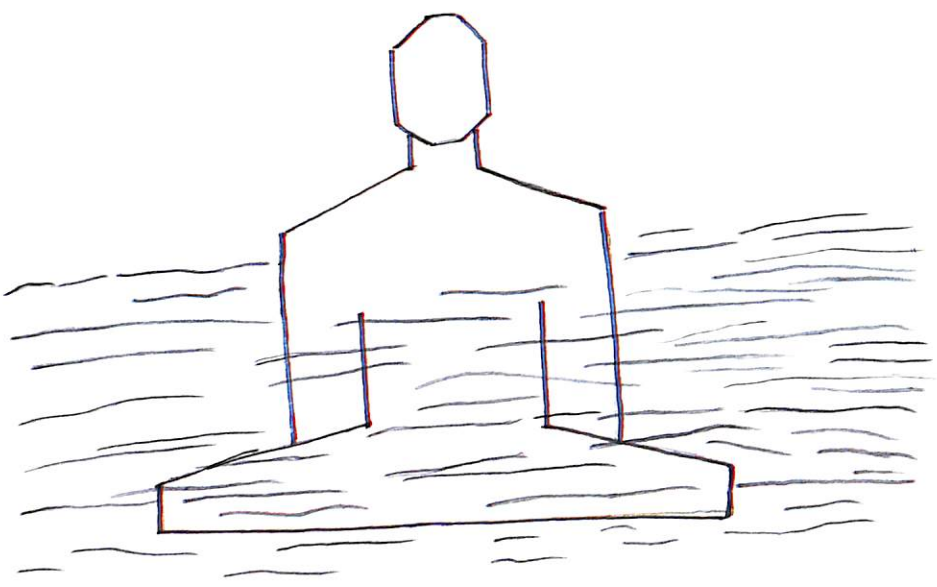
Group meditation at the Guru's residence: The meditation is good; no stray thoughts intrude. I can feel the energy flowing upward from the base of the spine and going into the atmosphere. The whole room is charged with cross-currents of energy at least two-and-a-half feet deep. I see the *Guru* sitting between two trees. Over his head is a canopy formed by a white sheet. I wonder whether the sheet symbolizes a cradle and if someone is going to be blessed with a child.

I did not know at that time that the white sheet was a symbol of the Source Consciousness, indicating its manifestation in the form of my *Guru*, for my spiritual growth.

"God, on being worshipped, bestows steadiness in devotion which leads to surrender. On the devotee surrendering, God shows His mercy by manifesting as the Guru. The Guru, otherwise God, guides the devotee, saying that God is in you and He is the Self. This leads to introversion of the mind and finally to realisation."

– *'Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi: Three Volumes in One'. Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, India. Ninth Edition, 1994, p. 80.*





13 March 1996

While taking a short nap in the afternoon, I see myself talking to a rabbit. Then, a bird perches on my finger and I start talking to it. I think I doze off. On awakening, I become aware of a sudden calm and quietness. I realize that my tongue is suspended and my lower and upper jaws are not meeting, though the lips are closed. I also miss the usual sound of my short, rhythmic breaths.

14 March 1996

While doing a breathing exercise, I suddenly become conscious of a heavy humming and then a lengthy "Hmmm, hmmm, hmmm..." The humming, more like the fading echo of a loud drumbeat, is in synchrony with the action of bending during the exercise. This really does make me laugh. Later on the 'H' becomes silent, so that it is more like an "Ummm, ummm, ummm." These are the sound vibrations, or *nada*, fading away. The association of the sound while bending reminds me of the opening and closing of the two wings of an accordion.

"Nada that is heard is of 10 kinds... the ninth is that of Mridanga (double drum)..."

– *Sivananda, op. cit., p. 295.*

15 March 1996

During my morning walk, I realize that the vibration I feel while lying in bed must be the earth element shifting in my body or rather, the *Kundalini* moving to give the sensation of a solid mass in motion, like an earthquake tremor.

During the breathing exercise, I hear the same sound as I did yesterday. It is the dull, resonant sound one hears after a huge drum has been struck.

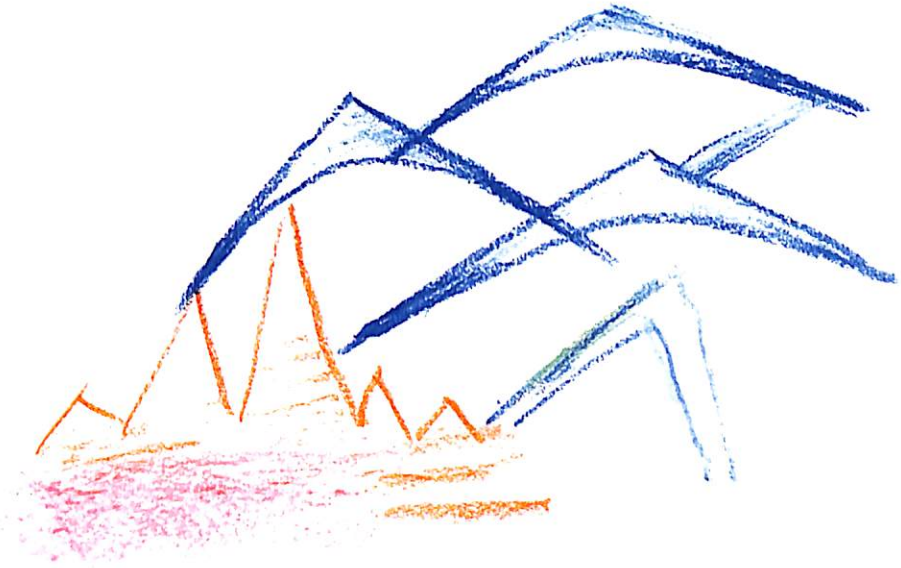
While lying down with my hands resting on my chest, I sense someone in white standing to the left of my head. Everything is at a standstill. The void above me is white in colour and that too is absolutely still. I think that whenever I reach this sort of stillness, I become a recipient of some special kind of knowledge. However, I cannot recall it later on. While I am writing this, I can smell a particular fragrance. It is vaguely familiar but eludes identification.

While resting in the afternoon, my tongue feels the subtle sensation of an electric current passing through it.

16 March 1996

I go to a vocal music programme in the evening. While listening to it with my eyes closed I see colourful vibrations rising in peaks over the singer's head, moving in rhythm with the tune. I notice that the colours change in accordance with the changing emotions as expressed in the song. I can also get whiffs of a particular fragrance off and on. As I understand it the music, or the sound creating the form, and the emotions lend it the colour. Perhaps in this same way, we too are supposed to be creations of the cosmic sound and our form is derived from the resultant vibrations. I have to absorb this and work on this theory to make it clearer. The theory that all creation is made from sound now makes more sense to me. *Guruji* thinks that, in all probability, it was the singer's aura that I saw.

This experience is known as 'synaesthesia' or the ability to experience something with more than the particular sense organ traditionally associated with it. The most common example is to 'see' the colours of sounds or to even 'taste' them. To hear the sounds of colours and even taste them is not unknown. A rare few have the ability to perceive the texture of any surface on their tongue without actually touching it. It has been theorized that all babies are born with these abilities but the excess of sensory perceptions in the course of normal life overwhelm them and these abilities are gradually forgotten. Traditionally, mystics and *shamans* usually go through a phase where this ability is reawakened because of their spiritual practices, but it seems to drop away of its own accord for some unexplained reason.



17 March 1996

During the morning meditation, the *Ajna chakra* is active. I see blue-coloured balls coming down from the sky. I also see flames of the same colour in front of my forehead.

While napping in the afternoon, I feel some pressure between the eyebrows. Sparks are emitted here on the inside. They subside in due course. In fact, it is my own hand that exerts this pressure during my sleep.

Then, I dream of being in the vicinity of an evil force. I see another *tantrik;* there is no doubt that I am also a *tantrik* in the dream. He is about 40 years old, tall and slim, with long black hair and a beard. He is wearing a white *dhoti.* His torso is bare. I can clearly recall his piercing eyes and combative stance. I recite my *mantra* with gusto. I also start spinning at a great speed throwing myself in the air; I succeed in shattering the evil force. This is repeated once again as I shatter the evil thought form of the other *tantrik.* At both times, there is a massive explosion like a thunderclap in the head.

19 March 1996

During meditation, there are two types of fragrances. The earlier one is now followed by a sweet fragrance – something like *kewda.* Now, during the course of the day, I can smell the fragrance.

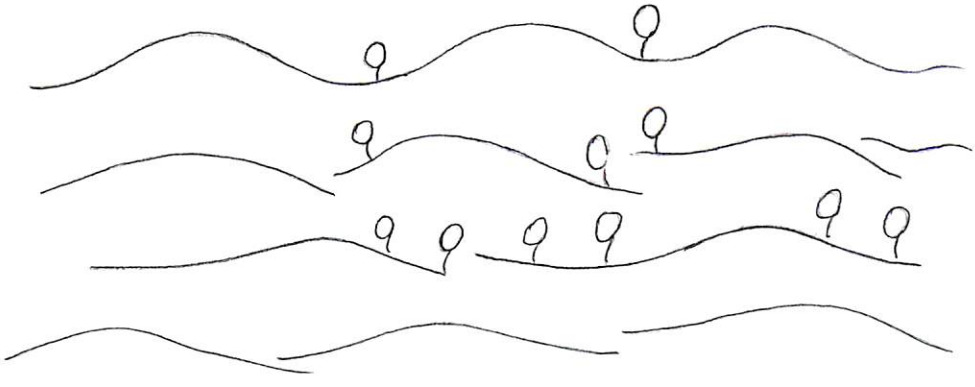
Group meditation at the Guru's residence: During the course of the meditation I feel the force of the vibrations against my body. Instead of *Guruji* I see light, as if coming from two headlights. After some time, I see the *Guru* sitting on a thick, inky blue liquid which is related to a higher state of consciousness. He starts moving slowly around the room. We are simultaneously being pushed around in a circle. After the meditation, I see small pink roses pouring out of the *Guru's* head. They form a mound and then they are all flung out in our direction. If I close my eyes, I can still picture the blue substance on which we were seated. Looking back, I think it was from this point in time that I became telepathically tuned to the *Guru* Consciousness.

20 March 1996

A journey to the higher realms. I am like a dark comet leaving streaks of silver light behind me. I come to a golden gate that leads into a golden passage and I keep going in. Later, I see a silver cord strung with stars going up from my body into space. This silver cord is the thread that connects me to the physical body. As long as this is intact, I can return to the body. This cord does not have any limited length.

21 March 1996

This time the meditation is full of light. There is white light going up from my body. Snowy mountains are silhouetted against the light. I go through a tunnel filled with stars and come to an area where a white liquid is flowing in abundance. It is neither water nor snow. I see a big group of monks' heads moving in one direction, while the rest of their bodies are submerged under this curious white substance.



22 March 1996

I'm in an area that has snowy mountains. There is a sea of snow-white energy flowing – the sea doesn't flow but the energy does. The *Prana* here is different – it is not a flow of energy but rather, it seems like flakes that are as big as saucers.

I see a white elephant* with a decorative head-dress and then other elephants join it. Suddenly, I see a figure in crisp white clothes sitting on my chest, facing me. He feels like a white rock – steady, without any sign of life in him. I can only see whoever it is from the neck downward. He has a book in his hand and is turning a page. I become absolutely still. My affirmation stops at: "...I am neither the body nor the mind." I feel as though I have to obey and absorb – though what, I do not know!

It is the *Kundalini* that has moved on from my chest towards the head, activating the *Vishuddha chakra*. The *Kundalini* in the form of white energy gives me the illusion of someone sitting on my chest.

**"Visuddha, meaning 'pure', is located at the juncture of the spinal column and medula oblongata behind the throat... Its associated animal is the celestial moon-white elephant without a band, Airavata... vehicle of the Vedic god Indra."*

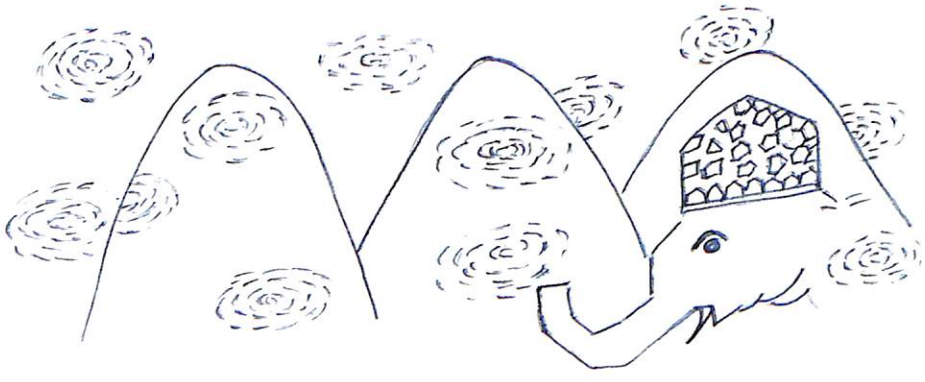
– Mookerjee, Ajit – 'Kundalini: The Arousal of the Inner Energy'. Thames and Hudson Ltd., London, 1982. Reprinted 1995, p. 42.

25 March 1996

Today's meditation seems significant to me. While doing the recitations I feel a wave in the brain which seems to physically shift its place. The region around the heart feels light. Energy seems to be pouring into that area, and then pours out and upward. I can see a snake's head as if flowing in water; it goes out of my head. My head feels rather different.

"You can distinctly feel that the mind is moving, that it is leaving its seat in the brain and that it is trying to go to its Yathasthana (original seat). You know that it has left its old groove and is now passing the new groove in the avenue. As a result of meditation, new channels are formed in the brain, new thought-currents are generated and new brain-cells are formed. There is a transformed psychology altogether. You have got a new brain, a new heart, new feelings, new sentiments and new sensations."

– Sivananda, op. cit., pp. 321-322.



26 March 1996

During meditation, it seems as if I am a bluish-black disc in the dark sky, with blue flames enveloping it. I hover above my body. Streaks of light start pouring into the body, turning it into a body of liquid light which starts flowing. It becomes a great mass of rolling clouds. Then a shining wave moves from my feet upward, over my body, towards my head and goes beyond. A strong fragrance emanates constantly from somewhere near my nose, even while I'm writing this.

Group meditation at the Guru's residence: Clouds come down and go over the *Guru* who takes on a dark shape. Then, I see a *Shivalinga* at an angle rotating faster than light. It steadies itself. Water goes over it and then bubbles start rising upward. I'm not sure if this is the *Guru* or myself. Perhaps this is a vision of the merging of minds. I expand – more like I divide from the centre sideways until there is a big hole – and then I come back together.

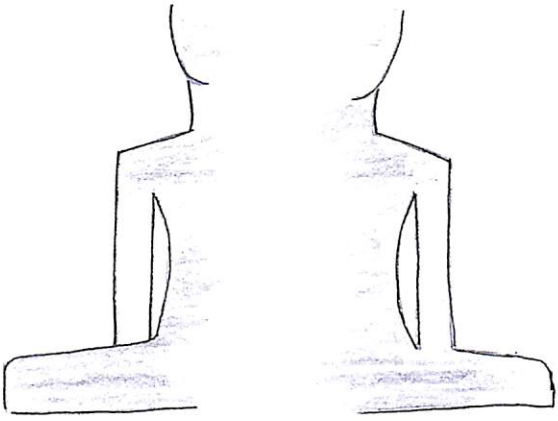
27 March 1996

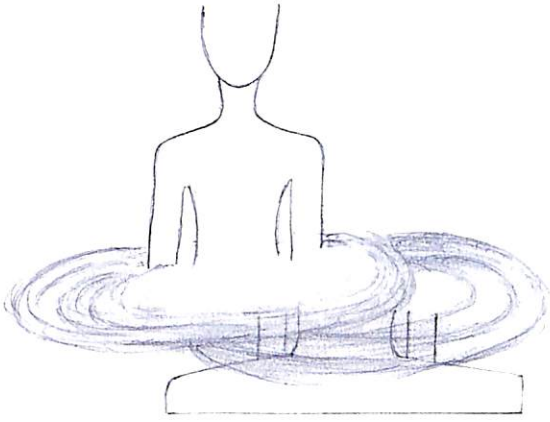
Early morning: I dream about meeting *Guruji* at his place. I have *Swami* Rama's book in my hand and hear his voice. He is talking to me, but from afar. I recall him saying the number '20'.

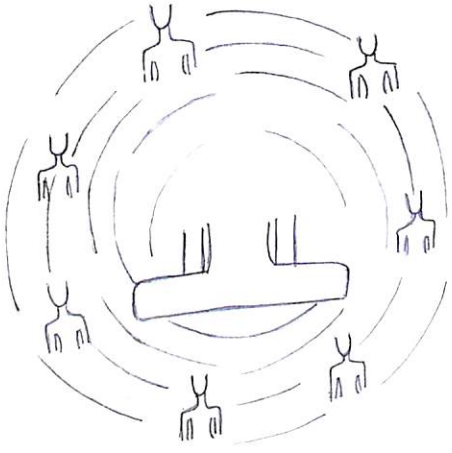
During meditation, the emphasis seems to be on the *Muladhar chakra*. A big river of energy is flowing, which turns into a torrent of liquid light. There is a fleeting impression of elephants marching in line with their trunks up. There is a gold wheel coming down. I am moving in the form of energy as space, and then as streaks of energy. The meditation ends on seeing myself standing with my hands joined and circumambulating around myself. At one stage, I notice a constant high-frequency whistle that has been going on from time to time for the last few days.

28 March 1996

Afternoon: While lying down, I see the body first dividing into half and drifting apart. Then it separates from the waist upward, with the upper half rotating around the lower half.





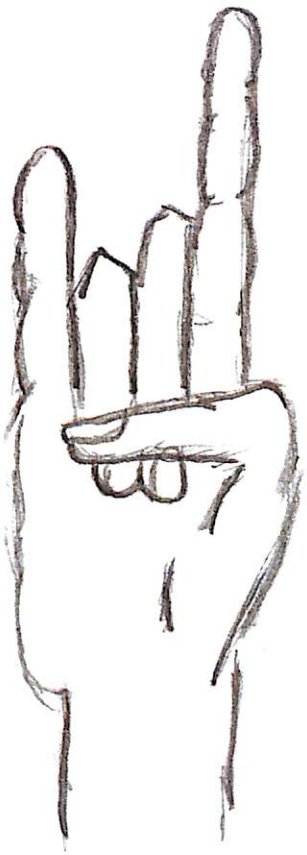


28 March 1996

I see an elderly figure wearing a *dhoti,* a *kurta* and a white turban. This person gives me very precise instructions on how to sit during meditation and in which *mudra* to hold my fingers, as shown in the accompanying figure. Thereafter, I always use this *mudra.* It is some sort of a stabilizing, controlling or balancing influence in meditation which makes me feel more centred.

29 March 1996

There is perfect stillness during meditation. All sounds recede. It seems as if the worlds within and without have come to a halt.



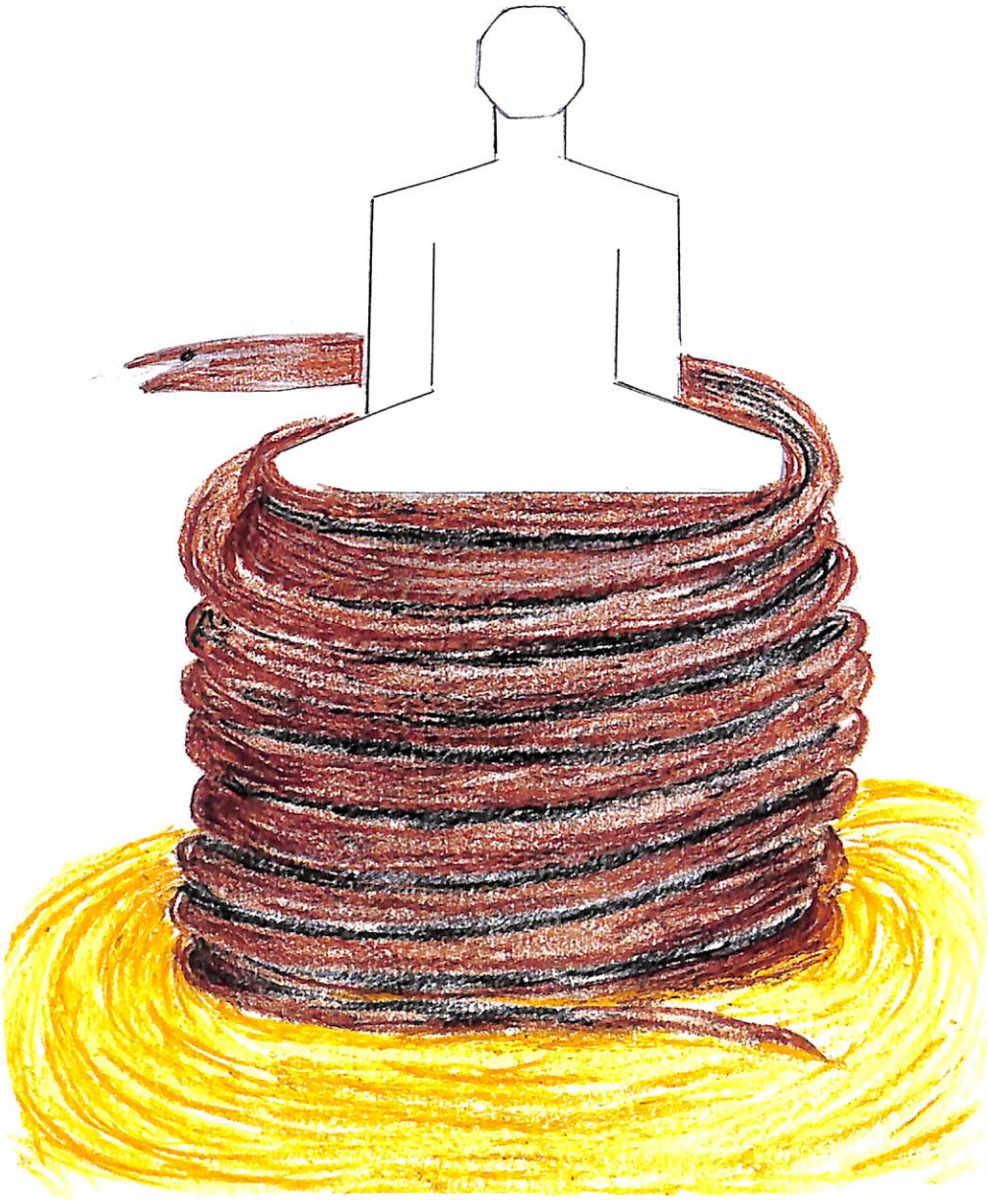
1 April 1996

During the recitation after the breathing exercise, I feel the shift of the brain inside the cranium once more. While meditating I experience discomfort bordering on pain in the toes, as well as an electric current passing through them.

2 April 1996

Group meditation at the Guru's residence: The breathing is imperceptible. For a brief period, I see the energy flowing from the right to the left, forming a shining gold disc under the *Guru*. It turns dark and thick and, taking the form of a coiled snake on which the *Guru* is sitting, it starts moving upward taking him along. Then, a thick copper and gold-coloured liquid starts flowing in the room. The meditation is very peaceful for the remaining period.

The figure of the *Guru* sitting on a snake is one of the most ancient archetypes we encounter in Indian culture, whether they are Hindu, Buddhist or Jain figures. The snake represents the esoteric wisdom that they have mastered as well as the dangers to the unwary, hence its suppression under the *Guru*. The snake is also the classical symbol of the *Kundalini*; so it is not surprising that Santosh had this particular vision.



3 April 1996

I am lying down after the exercises and meditating with my hands resting on my chest. Consciousness is poised in the heart region. There is no movement of *Prana* except for the *Anahat chakra* moving in rhythm. After some time, I start moving in a green tunnel that has straight walls instead of the usual rounded ones. I come to a closed door, which seems to open automatically, and I enter a huge hall. There seems to be some square-shaped design on the floor. Suddenly, there is only a wall of light facing me. Later, while talking to a friend, I understand that this is perhaps the *Hall of the Akashik Records* and a visit to this place implies the passage of yet another lifetime's *karmas* being resolved during the practice of meditation. As instructed by this particular friend, at all such times in the future, I open up a line of communication with the unseen forces by respectfully saying that I am aware of and receptive to all that I have to learn in such a situation.

There is a constant high-frequency whistle blowing in my ears and an occasional trail of fragrance.

4 pm: I dream that the astral hands and legs are getting contorted on their own. When I open my eyes my physical limbs appear normal. I'm doing some *kriya* with my mouth and my cheeks are blown out! I don't remember everything clearly. When I inform *Guruji* of this strange phenomenon he cautions me, for the first time, saying that I need to control it. He says that I had tortured my body by doing different penances in previous lives. What I got to understand was that my body was now trying to adopt the postures it had been accustomed to. I had probably adopted rigorous postures of standing on one leg or twisting my limbs to form different and weird postures. Now, I needed to become conscious of this since my present body was not used to the rigours of *Hatha yoga*.

The following vision is very clear. I am a man as well as a woman – two different bodies – in the process of lovemaking. The movements are fluid, graceful and alluring. We are offered what looks like sugar-coated black grapes.

Guruji's lecture on the same day brings the above vision back to mind. I am overwhelmed and awed at the intensity of the revelation. The play of *Shiva* and *Shakti* and the resultant drama of creation... I am the man and the woman.

"I am the Supreme Truth that lies beyond all other truths. I am Supreme, Siva, ever across the frontiers of delusions... I am the Supreme Light: I alone am. That am I, which is the irreducible, immortal, endless factor."

– Chinmayananda Swami – 'Meditation and Life'. Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, Bombay, 1980, p. 113.

4 April 1996

Evening: While lying down after meditation, at one stage, the flow of my breath seems to be restricted to the region of the throat and the heart. Then I seem to go into a tunnel. These tunnels, I realize, are passages in my own brain to the other realms of memory within the cerebral cortex. Later I see two graves and a group of people. One man is prominent. He has a beard and is wearing a cap and a long *kafni* (a plain robe). One grave is covered. The other is clean and empty – it turns into a straight-walled tunnel with energy floating in it. I walk into the tunnel but find that I reach nowhere.

5 April 1996

Last night there was a slight shift in the brain, like hidden memories being shaken and brought to the surface of awareness. During meditation, I sense people moving around. At one stage, I see a hand making a certain gesture. It is poised over my chest, palm downward. Everything in me stops for some time.

Then, what first looks like a silvery liquid starts flowing over the surface of the heart. The focus then shifts to the head; I am poised there. The *Prana* starts moving from one side to the other in the head. It feels as though the top of the head opens and expands, spreading out like a dish antenna, opening up a new experience of the 'Totality Consciousness' and also of telepathic travel.

3:30 pm: I dream that I am in the *Siddhivinayak* temple. The door is closed but the watchman asks me to go in. I wake up and lie with my eyes closed and see two black eyes staring at me. They are *Siddhivinayak's* eyes. I keep looking at them. Rays are passed from his left eye to my left eye. They are broken rays. My hand covers my right eye.

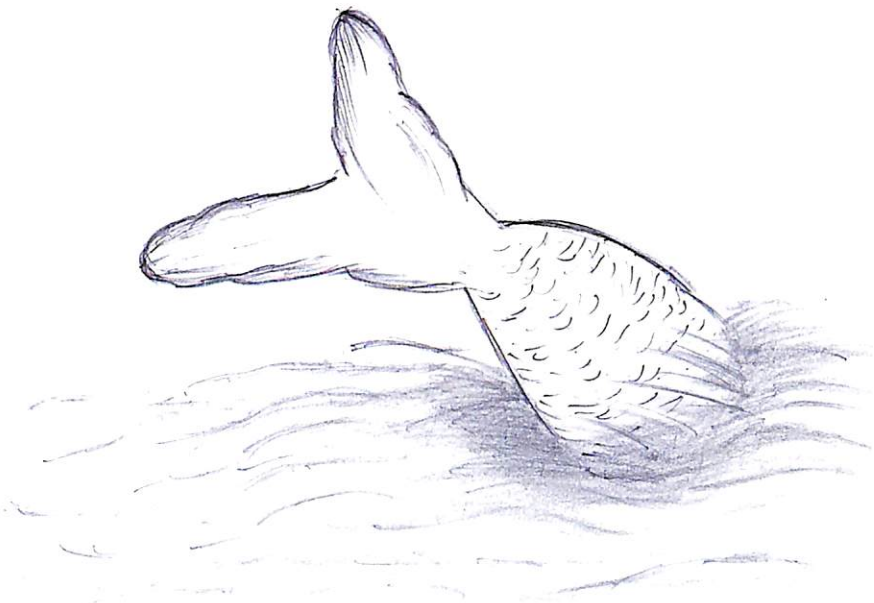
6 April 1996

I see a huge, whale-like fish splashing down into the sea.

Among the cultures of Polynesia and in at least one Eskimo tribe, the whale is the giver of life to mankind. It is a peculiar sort of genesis myth, never part of high culture, but it does exist out there and Santosh seems to have accessed it. Whales are mammals who have forsaken land and have returned to the sea. They are an apt metaphorical figure to express the return to the Truth (the real, original home?) which splashing into the water seems to denote.

8 April 1996

I enjoy perfect silence in the heart centre. I am in deep meditation that is centered on the heart.



9 April 1996

Group meditation at the Guru's residence: Meditation starts with an unknown fragrance rising. My consciousness travels upward with it. There is a moving circle, with the effect of the colours of a peacock feather playing upon it. It then becomes liquid, with the moonlight playing on it this time. It is then transformed into a crystal clear fountain, which again changes into icy discs. During the course of the meditation, I'm aware of going somewhere and then returning. There is a vague awareness of being the recipient of some particular kind of knowledge. Blue lines cross my body at the shoulders forming a wheel, and I begin to float in the starry void.

10 April 1996

Today, something happened – though I don't know what! I don't know when I stopped reciting the affirmations. My attention is centered on the chest. I could stay this way forever. The brain seems quite numb, even after 15 minutes of pushing the body out of meditation. There is some discomfort in the sole of my left foot. The body feels heavy.

I bring this matter to *Guruji's* attention. He says that the numb feeling in the brain is the result of deep meditation. He suggests that I fix a particular time-frame for meditation at the start of each session, so that I can automatically come out of it when the time is up.

I see *Lord Shiva's* face set in a rock; his staring eyes emanate rays of light. Clear water is flowing over the rock.

12 April 1996

Now and then, I see the eyes of a woman staring fixedly at me from close quarters. She has a contemplative look.

19 April 1996

While meditating, my body feels as though it is erected like a house of cards. Then, I see it folding up and collapsing inward to allow the astral body to come up and gain predominance over the physical one.

Evening: Two hands playfully cover my eyes from behind, but whoever it is refuses to reveal him or herself to me. The touch is very light; there is an air of mischief behind the gesture.

22 April 1996

Evening: A shining flower made of light (like a lotus), comes shimmering and rotating from space. It starts to move from my head downward, touching my body, till it reaches my feet. It then moves up and starts rotating on the head. I seem to have a fascination for snakes. I see a thick, black snake gliding towards me; now, of course, I know that it is the *Kundalini* moving.

23 April 1996

I see a white stallion prancing about.

The white stallion has traditionally been an Indian metaphor for the spiritual urge. It represents a level of success and innocent achievement along the path. The stallion is also a symbol for the essential freedom that is the natural condition of the soul. Many artists capture it in their paintings.

Now and then see 2
eyes at my eye level
looking at me.

24 April 1996

Significant. I travel very fast as a big ball of light. Suddenly, big doors open. I enter and remain there for a while. Then, another smaller door opens and I go in. This must be the *Hall of the Akashik Records.*

Otherwise, astrally, I am usually in a snow-covered area nowadays. I can see people moving about. I also see myself casually going about.

The energy gets activated in the right side of my body. By the time it reaches my chest, there is a feeling of constriction and discomfort. I tell myself to relax. As soon as I do that, the energy passes through and then goes out. Once the energy is out, I feel calm.

25 April 1996

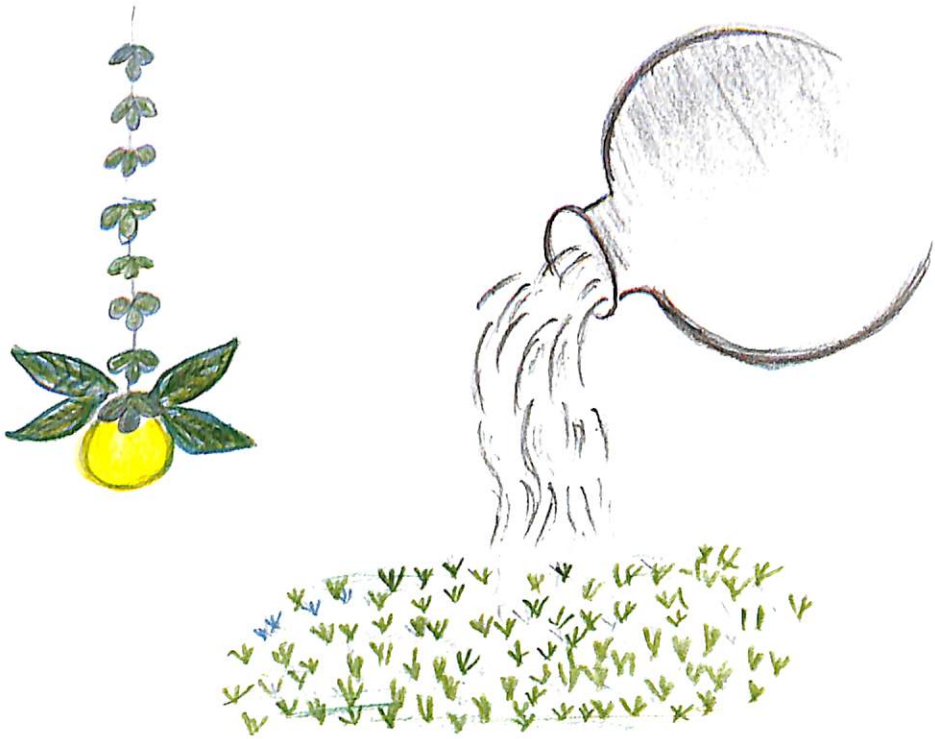
There is a slight shift in the head. I go very far into a point beyond the sky. Later, I see a jagged piece of land with a spotlight on a certain place. Then I see a dark line gliding around. I realize that it is a long snake. I then see many other snakes gliding around.

Evening: There is a child, about nine or ten years old, running towards me. Then he turns around to get away from me, running very fast. A woman comes to me and slaps me. This bewilders me; I have done nothing to invite this. The slap is not in connection with the child. There is no sensation of physical pain, of course, because there is no physical body as I seem to be engaged in astral travel to another dimension of existence.

There is a figure dressed in a turban, a white shirt and a *dhoti* sitting opposite me. He tells me very firmly in Hindi, *"Upar jao... upar jao"* (Move up... move up). After some time, he admonishes me to go up once more! In hindsight, it seems obvious that he is my Guide in the astral world, who is concerned about my being in an area where I shouldn't be. The other figures also disappear as my consciousness starts to rise.

25 April 1996

I see a *matka* pouring water in an arc-shaped stream. It is watering a grassy plot. I also see a flower and a sour lime suspended from a string. In India, the sour lime and chilli are used to ward off evil.



29 April 1996

I see another picture of a *matka*. This time it is pouring water over me, until I see myself under water with the dome of a temple rising over my head.

30 April 1996

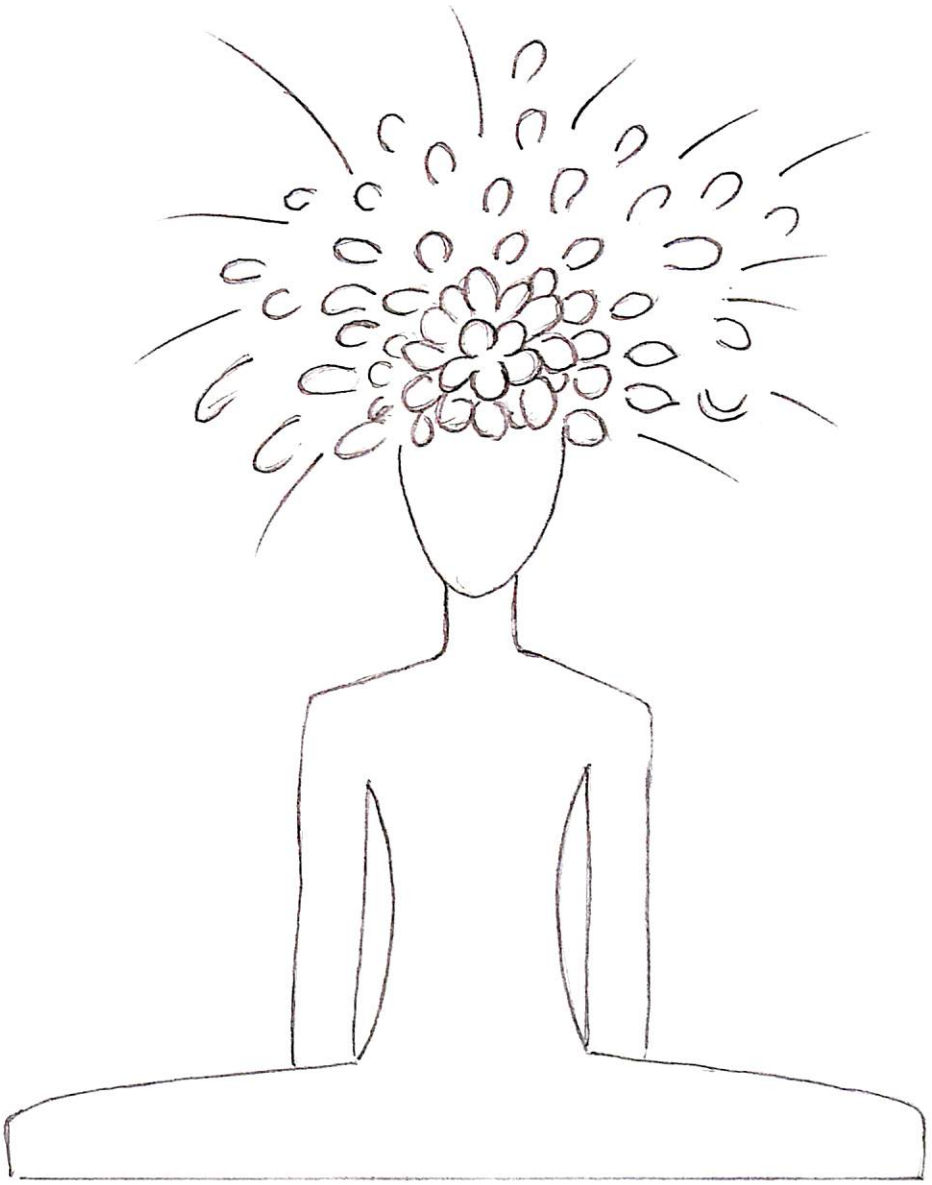
Group meditation at the Guru's residence: I see the *Guru* as a large coconut, descending into a *havan kund* (a cauldron in which a fire for a ritual is lit), with the flames in the process of consuming it.

"And lastly sahasrara is visualized as the fireplace where the rituals are performed, initiations are given and worship is carried out... the fireplace with the burning fire, big tongues of flame."

– Saraswati, Swami Satyananda – 'Yoga Nidra'. Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, Bihar, India, 1976. Sixth Edition, 1998, p. 119.

30 April 1996

I see the top of my head as a big flower, rotating and throwing petals. This is my *Sahasrar chakra* in full motion. The coconut in the Hindu religion symbolizes the ego. Its descent into the fire symbolizes the sacrifice of the ego. I now realize I was given the previous vision so that my knowledge of my *Guru* would be enhanced and that my faith would be well-rooted.



1 May 1996

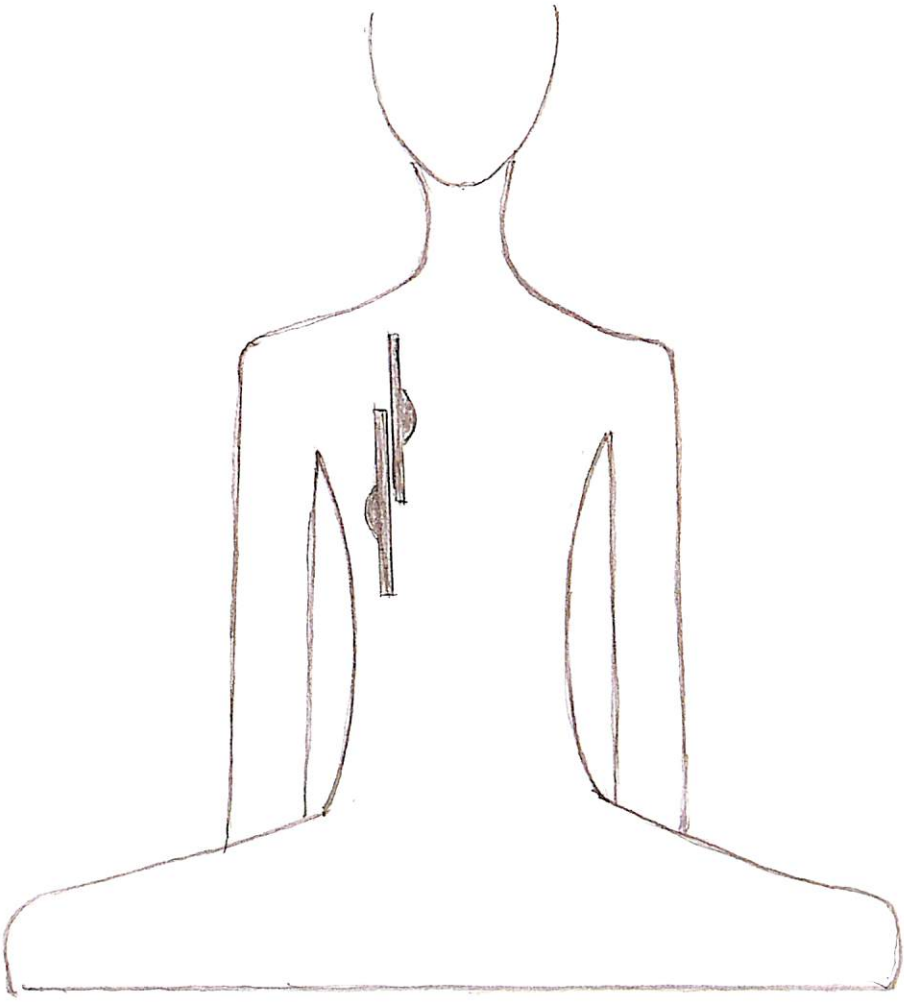
In the heart region, I see a form that divides itself. One part starts moving away and rises upward.

2 May 1996

I wander back into a past life. I see battle tanks, troops, warships and a dismembered leg that is barefoot. It is my leg lying right next to my head. I see a woman sitting, resting her chin on her hands.

4 May 1996

I have noticed that I always say, "I am seeing." Thought, conception, perception. Thinking, conceptualizing, perceiving. Is it the thought that is conceptualized and is then perceived? Are the three related? Or do I perceive what 'IS'?



7 May 1996

I am a shadow. I see myself moving about, running around as a shadow without a human body.

Group meditation at the Guru's residence: The *Guru* is in the form of a gold *Shivalinga* in water. There is water in the whole room.

8 May 1996

While lying down for meditation after the exercises, I see white birds emerging from a rock. These delicate white birds come flying out and go back to merge into the rock. The rock is my forehead and the white birds signify vibratory forms of the *Ajna chakra*.

Rocks in Chinese thought are supposed to be full of *Chi*, the vital breath or *Prana*. They are living entities in their own right; a rock is deemed capable of dying when the *Chi* leaves it. A powerful rock may even become a sacred spot or a personal mentor, its energies being conducive to the development of psychic and intuitive abilities. Rocks have such a transcendent aspect to them, an impact on the surrounding environment far in excess of their physical limits, that they are called *Yun Ken*, the 'roots of the clouds', and they form the framework for heaven and earth.

Birds, in most dream contexts, symbolize the higher Self though the white bird usually stands for purity and accessible instinctive wisdom too. The rock, which Santosh herself says is the forehead, i.e. the more advanced cortical centres of the brain lie behind it, is the evolutionary framework of these *Kundalini* experiences. But they cannot all be assimilated or understood at one go, so certain aspects of the *Ajna chakra* are revealed in vibratory form as birds. However, that particular knowledge of what the birds signify would be unique to each individual experiencing it.

9 May 1996

A thick, fluffy, white cloud-like form goes over me in slow motion, starting from the feet. There is also a massive white elephant walking on my chest. Vibrations of the *Anahat chakra* create the form of the elephant.

Today, for the first time, I become aware that there is a minor *chakra* located on my tongue. I also feel that in the state of 'non-being' – the tongue becomes fuller or juicier.

10 May 1996

What I notice is that the different rhythms or vibrations of the *chakras* create different forms. At first there is a vibration, and then it gives rise to a form. If I disassociate myself from the form, I am left with only the vibration. I can create the form again by disassociating from the vibration.

Night: My physical body is on one side of the bed while my consciousness is on the other.

13 May 1996

Lying down after the exercises, I am submerged in a thick, heavy, white liquid. The pressure is so strong that it seems to be pushing my body. The urgency to record my experience is gone, with the result that when I think of putting down the experience most of it has faded out of my mind.

14 May 1996

Today, I feel there will be a turning point or a change of direction to my meditation. The body is absolutely light and it is at peace within and without. There is no movement of *Prana* or any *chakra* – just stillness.

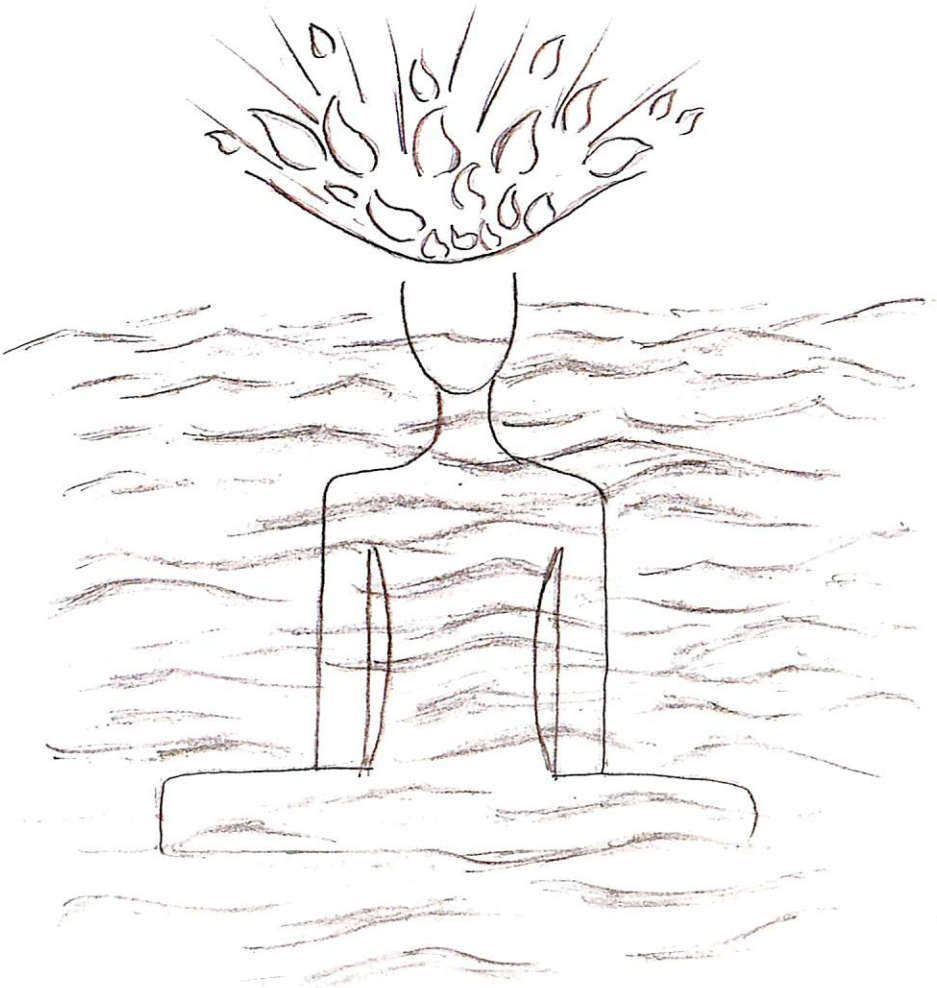
A shift occurs in the nasal area. Only time will tell what this will unfold.

14 May 1996

I see my body submerged in water, in a meditative pose. There is an open *Sahasrar chakra* bearing white petals at the top of the head.

16 May 1996

I realize that the stillness and calmness in the body are the result of the *Prana* becoming more subtle and the grossness reducing. The constant whistle is perhaps on account of my body operating at a certain vibratory level. The travel today was more purposeful and directed. However, I do not know exactly what I have absorbed.



17 May 1996

I have noticed that the 'non-being' state is achieved when my consciousness, in meditation, is mainly focused on the *Anahat chakra*.

17 May 1996

I see a gold tortoise. Either it appears to be moving through sparks or the sparks arise as it moves.

The golden tortoise is a significant part of Hindu religious life. However, not all are aware that in certain cultural systems within the larger ambit of Hinduism, the tortoise or turtle represents the *Prana*. *Prana* is the exact counterpart of *Ki* or *Chi*.

In popular mythology, the world is supposed to be held up by a tortoise. This is a metaphorical manner of expressing a fundamental truth that the most important thing in life, indeed its ultimate support, is the breath.

Such metaphorical representations are actually an attempt to convey the truths of *Kundalini* and religious experience in a manner that is immediately clear to the initiate, but remains as a pretty image to those outside the loop. Gnostic mystics developed an elaborate 'hidden' language to communicate their experiences in secrecy and security. They shared this trait of the Hindu culture in taking a roundabout route to get to the point. In many temples, there is a raised carving of a tortoise on the floor directly in front of the shrine of the God. The message being sent is unambiguous – *Prana* is the support of the universe.

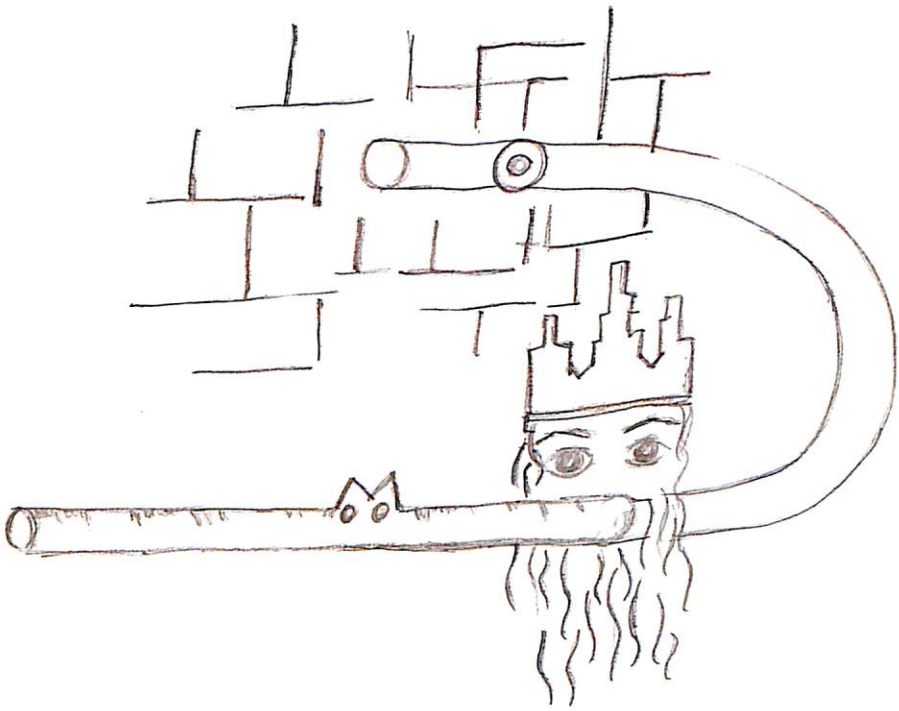
21 May 1996

4:30 am: During meditation, the *Ajna chakra* becomes active and its vibrations are like the wings of a big bird in flight. The movement of this *chakra* shifts to the *Sahasrar chakra* at the top of the head. There is a shift in the brain.

I go through the experience of the netherworld. I see a lot of insects crawling. The sky is full of dark birds. I see a vision of a number of faces rising from within my body and moving out of the head. A beautiful face moves out of my body. The head is decorated and it is smiling. This is followed by different faces – male, poor, rich, ugly, etc.

Everything happens in quick succession. I see wild faces and animal faces. Then there is an animal's head, like a boar with an elongated snout, which looks like a never-ending tunnel. I go into it and travel at lightning speed until the face changes into that of a man with white hair and a crown. His mouth is wide open and forms another tunnel. I keep going into that tunnel waiting to see where I come out. The tunnel curves and I come out of what seems like an eye in a rock. I come out of the left eye which is like a dark hole. I am using only my left eye. What I understand is that Consciousness has taken a quick survey of its evolution from the animal kingdom to the human species.

A few days later when I describe this experience to a friend, she asks me if my size was reduced to enable me to travel through the small tunnel of the boar's snout and the king's mouth. This sudden question makes me think and I realize that I was not travelling as the physical body, but as Consciousness.



THE GURU AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF 'INDIFFERENCE'

It is my experience and learning that once an aspirant places himself in the energy field of a *Guru,* he has to be determined, strong and steadfast in his devotion and trust in the *Guru.* It requires tremendous strength, insight and a sense of discrimination to hold on to the faith that has been built; there are times when the aspirant is tempted to question whether the *Guru* is really aware of him or if he is lost in his own world. Once the aspirant has borne all the torments and turbulations successfully and has managed to maintain his balance, he comes to realize and understand that it is only by being in the energy field of the *Guru* that he has emerged unscathed and complete in himself.

This reminds me of a story: A man sat watching a butterfly trying to struggle through a small hole in a cocoon. Several hours passed and the butterfly stopped, probably through sheer exhaustion. The man, in an endeavour to be helpful, increased the size of the hole and the butterfly easily slipped out. To his chagrin, the man saw that the butterfly had shrivelled wings and a swollen body. He waited for days for its wings to grow and to see it fly, but he just saw it struggling and crawling till it died. Had the man let nature take its course, the purposeful struggle would have forced the excess fluid from the body and into the wings so that, it would be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon.

If the *Guru* allowed us to go through our life without the struggle, we would probably be like the butterfly – crippled, weak and never able to fly and realize our true nature.

Chapter Five

THE GENTLE FORCE

So come to the Poet his songs,
All hitherward blown
From the misty realm, that belongs
To the vast Unknown.

For voices pursue him by day,
And haunt him by night,
And he listens, and needs must obey,
When the Angel says: "Write!"

The Poet And His Songs
– H. W. Longfellow

The *Kundalini* lured me into her magic realm, taking me on a fascinating visual journey. She became a gentle friend and, after we fostered a relationship of trust, she started working in the areas where I was apprehensive due to the discomfort I felt. I started to feel the nudges that were painful at times. However, if I could not tolerate the pressure she would withdraw immediately. Consciousness followed her as she worked within the body, showing me different colours at different centres. In the beginning, since the attention was focused on the *Swadhisthan* and *Manipur chakras*, I saw yellow, orange or red colours. Later, when it moved onto the upper *chakras*, I saw gold, pink, mauve or blue hues and ultimately white.

The working of the energy on the spleen gave me more freedom of movement in the astral realm. It was due to the thorough cleansing and activation of the *Spleen chakra* that my awareness became sharp and I started identifying with the Source Consciousness. When I move in the astral realm, I have an astral body; whereas when I move as pure Consciousness, I have no form.

23 May 1996

It seems I have reached *Devlok*, the realm of the Gods. This is a realm of unchanging beauty and grace, a realm of music, dance and sensual ecstasy. Here there is no suffering or struggle.

I am in a soft, cloudy, white area. There is a white horse prancing about with a beautiful white mane and tail. I find myself riding the horse. The whole experience is an ethereal, joyous one for me.

It is extremely interesting to note that the white stallion in the previous chapter has reappeared and this time Santosh rides him, though she does not seem to be aware that it is the same horse. The mounting and riding of the horse represents a measure of comfortable acceptance of these experiences. This ride is yet another sign that the manner in which she responds to her inner evolution has changed.

24 May 1996

Different scenes continue off and on during the meditation. At times, I see women dancing, wearing colourful costumes and beautiful head-dresses. Sometimes, there is a couple going through the gliding motions of lovemaking. What is fascinating about this world is the grace, fluidity of movements and the beauty of their actions. They are completely immersed in whatever they do.

26 May 1996

The sound of breathing during the meditation – of inhalation and exhalation – is almost like the breathing of a giant. Is this because, unknown to myself, I could have diminished in size during the course of the meditation?

28 May 1996

Group meditation at the Guru's residence: The need to speak out about my journeys seems to have diminished; so also has the urgency to demand an explanation from the *Guru*. Perhaps I have achieved more clarity, about the whole process, through all the on-going library research that I have undertaken.

What I term as 'going with the Master Mind' is the experience of travelling with the *Guru* at the level of pure Consciousness. At first, the stream of energy of the *Guru* Consciousness passes me by. It forms a coloured, rope-like circle made of a liquid substance. Then I see the whole meditation group rising higher and higher. I lose the *Guru* for some time and find myself on my own, travelling on a never-ending path. I realize I'm alone and I come back looking for him. Once again, we go out together travelling under a canopy of stars, until we come to what looks like the source of a great, gushing waterfall. We stay there for a while and then begin the descent.

31 May 1996

I feel a strange vibratory sensation in my feet, especially in the left foot. Then I see myself as a shadowy form, flitting around.

5 June 1996

I find that I've been in a state of 'non-being' for the longest period so far – for almost a whole hour. I was forced to get out of it only because of a sense of duty towards my household. I want to understand if one can stay in it forever. Are duties and responsibilities the only reasons for limiting one's stay here?

6 June 1996

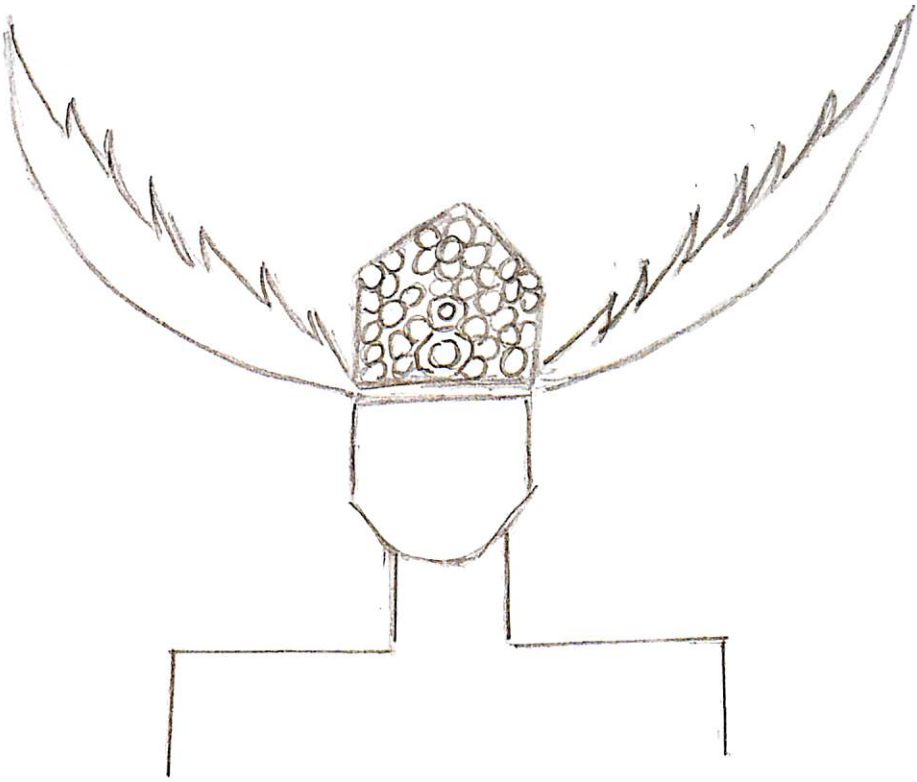
I find myself in *Devlok*, the astral plane of the heavenly deities. Nobody takes notice of my presence. They appear to be engrossed in their own revelry, dancing and merry-making. The men are richly attired; all of them wear identical golden headgear that is close-fitting with wings on the sides. The women are dressed in rich, flowing garments and they are adorned from head to toe with ornaments. Even the elephants and horses are adorned in ceremonial finery. Handsome men, beautiful women, music, dancing and total abandonment are the order of this plane. What makes it even more fascinating to watch is the fluidity and grace with which all the inhabitants move.

While it is true that Santosh identified the place as *Devlok*, the Abode of the Gods, their winged helmets strike a new note unknown to Indian iconography. It is reminiscent of Hermes, the Healer. More than anything else, it represents healing as well as a consolidation of her experiences. Hermes is also the God of Crossroads, the vital spot where one makes destiny-altering choices. The previous day, she had recorded that only her sense of duty to her household had wrenched her away from her meditation. She was unsure about the role one's duties and responsibilities play in limiting one's spiritual adventures. Then, Hermes, the God of Choices, appears the very next day as if to explain things to Santosh.

It is, without doubt, a crucial turning point in her inner journey. The quality of experiences shows a marked difference from here onward.

"You will find a huge collection of Devatas and celestial ladies with various musical instruments in their hands... The beings and objects with whom you are in touch during the early period of meditation belong to the astral world. They are similar to human beings minus a physical overcoat. They have desires, cravings, love, hatred, etc., just as human beings have... The lustrous forms are higher Devatas of mental or higher planes..."

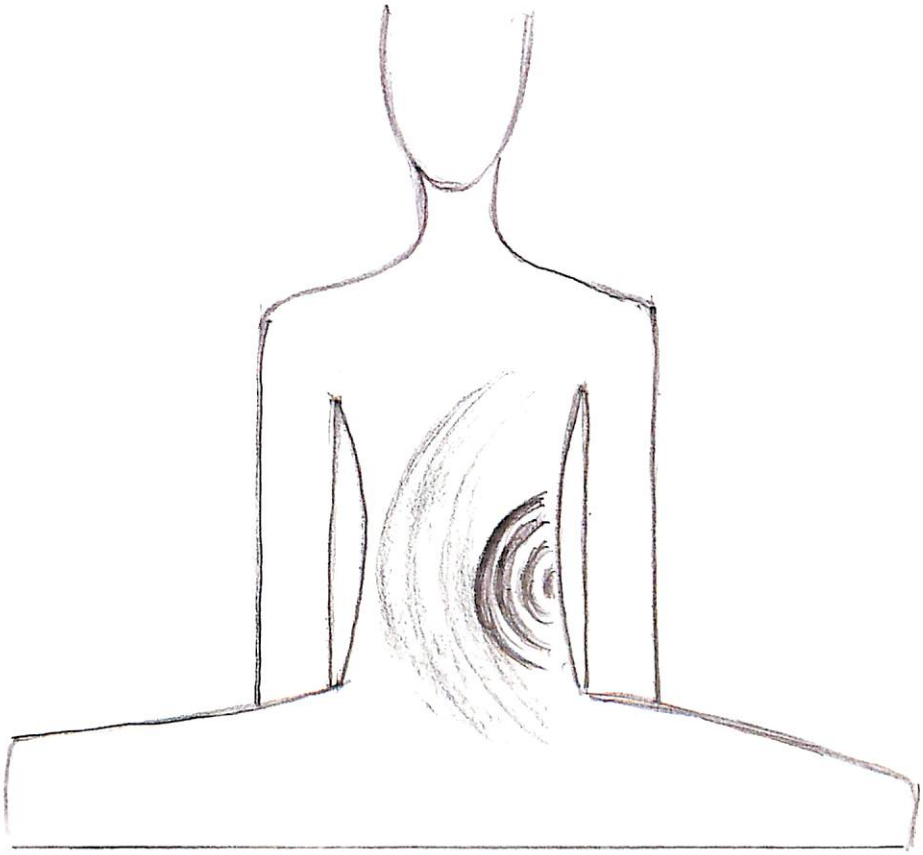
– *Sivananda, op. cit., pp. 297-298.*



6 June 1996

For the first time today, I feel a concentrated energy flow around the area of the *Spleen chakra*. Even the *Ajna chakra* becomes mildly active for a short while. I realize that my spleen must be very clogged. Perhaps this is why I had fallen ill last year – at times, I had a high fever and even got malaria. But ever since the *Spleen chakra* was cleared over two or three meditations, I have been as fit as a fiddle.

Santosh realizes why she was ill the previous year – because her spleen was clogged. This realization is vouchsafed only after the Hermes energy visits her, or she visits it.



8 June 1996

Today, my attention is drawn towards the *Spleen chakra* once again. It was only dispensing concentrated energy yesterday; today it seems to be lighter and in motion. It almost seems to be creating its area of influence by pushing the organs aside and making a pathway for the energy to spread all over. It gives me a feeling of lightness; of being only Consciousness, without a body.

11 June 1996

I await the unfoldment of this new phase. Today, after the exercises, the left eye and the left half of the brain, and then the right eye and right half of the brain, go through a particular process. The vibratory sensation in the feet continues.

12 June 1996

Usually in meditation, the energy first gets concentrated in one particular region as I enter the state of 'non-being'. The focus has now shifted to the right side of the head. For the first time today, the state of energy focus has shifted from the chest to the head. This is probably my exit and entry point now.

14 June 1996

I see flames in the chest. The right hand gets tingling sensations as though I have received an electric shock.

From the left side of the head, I see a horde of human heads in motion. Emerging from the forehead, I see a marriage procession. I later see the procession from the rear, with elephants walking away from me in the opposite direction.

15 June 1996

While standing in the balcony, a crow flies down and sits near me cawing to get my attention, until we look at each other almost eyeball to eyeball. I ask it "Do you want to give me some knowledge? I'm listening." It flies away...

In Norse mythology, the crows – to be exact, the ravens – Hugin and Munin, Thought and Memory respectively, communicate the news of the world to the ears of the All-Father Odin. It is very significant that Santosh instinctively enquired if the crow had a message for her. Since it is one of the premises of this book that mythological constructs are literary versions of inner experiences, the question is actually spot on. In alternative states of consciousness, that is what crows are supposed to do.

While doing the evening meditation, I feel that I am looking within for the first time.

17 June 1996

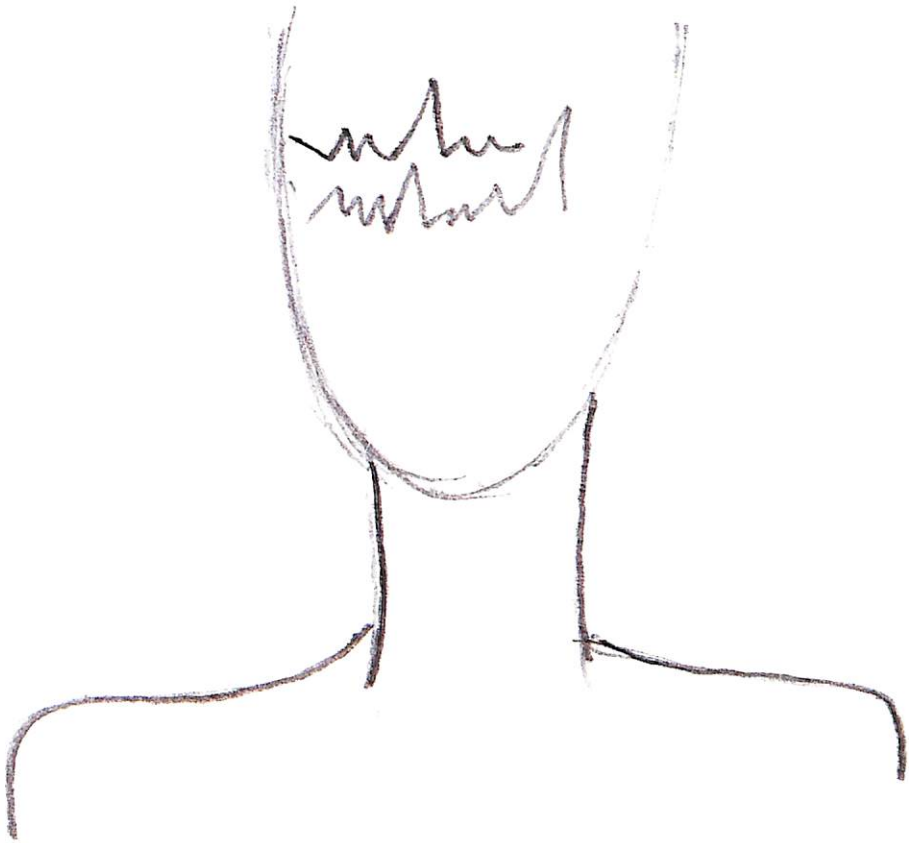
I realize what 'looking within' means.

There is only looking now, but the earlier curiosity as to where the mind is going and what is being registered is no longer there. Today, it is the right side of the brain that seems to be active. It feels as though I am recording something.

As Santosh herself explains, the manner in which she has been interpreting or responding to these experiences has altered significantly. She literally 'sees' things differently. The way she feels has also changed.

22 June 1996

The insides look like a black well. I see my face looking back at me with a serious expression. I notice, during the evening meditation, that I am breathing only through the left nostril.



25 June 1996

Group meditation at the Guru's residence: Today I move as pure Consciousness circling *Guruji*, who is also pure Consciousness. I go out as Consciousness and come back as Consciousness, which is the awareness of being what 'I Am' without any limitation of time or space. From this point on, I start relating to the *Guru* and myself as Consciousness.

26 June 1996

The gentle pressure in my ears continues. It is more like contraction and expansion of the nerves. There is a feeling of something pouring in. Similar pressure is also felt between my eyebrows. Then, what looks like a massive paintbrush (like one used to paint a wall) of Consciousness comes over my body, draws out my consciousness and drags it away with itself. I experience a heavy sensation in my head.

27 June 1996

Today, I realize that what I have missed all my life is the love and the gentleness – to a depth which no individual can possibly match – as is given to me in the course of the daily meditation by the *Kundalini* force residing within my own being. I am aware that this feeling of being cherished must emanate from the very Source itself.

During meditation, a *chakra* in the mouth starts moving and my teeth begin to chatter.

My forehead is full of bright light with a golden *chakra* rotating there. In the light I see that somebody's left hand is stretched out, palm facing up, as if to give me something.

28 June 1996

There is a single file of kings or *Devas* in procession. Then, I see a funeral stretcher being carried by them. Crowds of people are moving in one direction, while I walk through going in the opposite direction. I see myself wearing a white *dhoti* with its loose end slung over the upper body. For the first time, I see myself as a male. I realize that I am the dead man on the stretcher and I am walking through my own funeral.

While looking in the mirror, I am surprised to see my reflection disappear. This curious phenomenon lasts for a couple of seconds, until I become fully aware of the blankness in the mirror. Much later one of my friends also mentions that the same thing happened to her when she was a child, and she recalls the horror she felt upon seeing her mirror image vanish before her very eyes. In my case, there is only the sense of detachment that accompanies every quirk of the *Kundalini* experience.

The funeral is surely a coming to terms with the primal fear of death. It becomes increasingly clear that from here on, Santosh does not fear death or even look upon it in the same light that most humans do. This experience could have been cast aside as her merely brooding over death, but what makes this funeral vision significant is what follows – her reflection disappears. In ancient India, unlike in the West where this is a quality of the *Vampiri*, the disappearance of the reflection meant that one had achieved the (perhaps temporary) dissolution of the ego, the chief culprit in convincing us of our separateness from the rest of the universe.

That her friend was horrified instead of elated when it happened to her as a child only indicates that the culture has forgotten one of its most potent symbols. The *Ardhanarishawara* sculpture – God as half-man, half-woman; an anthropomorphic yin-yang if you will – holds a mirror on its female side. As long as there is no reflection in that mirror, he/she/it is free of the stain of the ego. Santosh was neither elated nor scared when it happened to her, which is as it should be.

4 July 1996

During meditation, Consciousness has moved to where it sees well-built figures moving about, dressed in white *dhotis* and *kurtas*, as participants in some sort of a ceremony.

5 July 1996

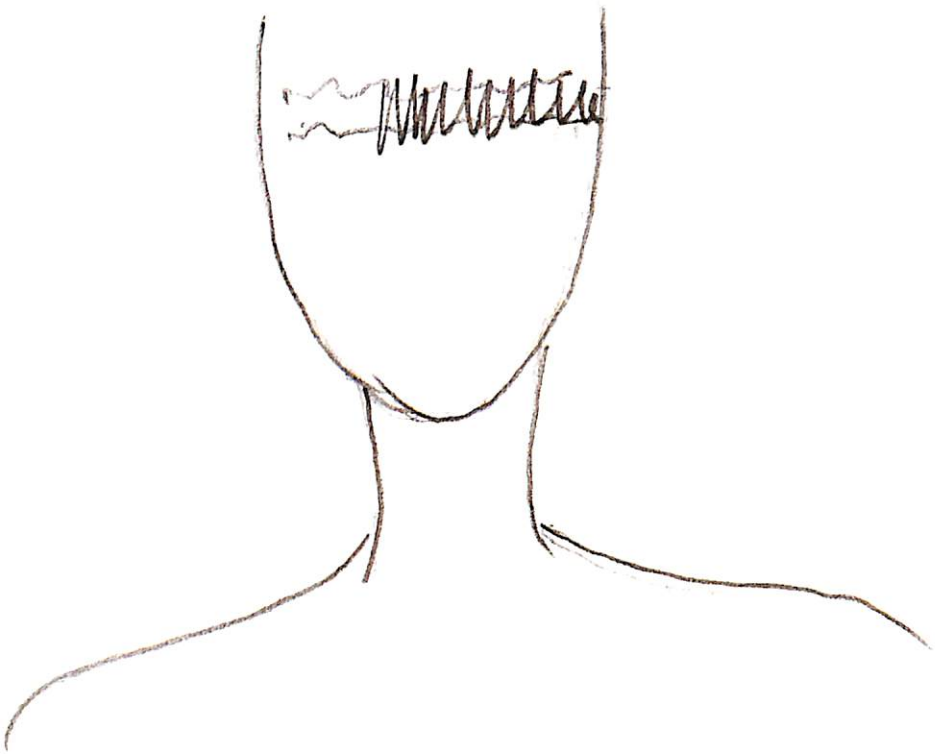
As the meditation comes to an end, I can feel my body coming back to its normal size and shape; I can't tell whether it is the sensation of shrinking in or filling out.

6 July 1996

I have no idea what happens today – it is difficult to describe. I am not in deep meditation. It is not even like switching off; I simply cannot feel my body. There is no movement of *Prana*. The affirmations go on, but they have no meaning. The awareness of my body returns later accompanied by a crackling noise, almost like the static sound emitted by a radio station just before the frequency is tuned.

6 July 1996

Evening: On the left side of the forehead a current seems to be moving over a rough surface and clearing, almost erasing, it. It travels to the right and then returns back smoothly.



12 July 1996

Today, the balance residue of thick, black liquid is removed from a *nadi* of the *Kundalini* passage, without any hindrance, as if clearing the blockage from a pipe.

My abdominal cavity is coated with a silvery powder. I see a tube emitting white smoke, almost like fumigation. Then a trickle of water starts, turning into a small muddy stream. It keeps flowing until it becomes progressively clearer.

What is Bliss? It is love for all creation – the trees, the creatures, the sea, the mountains, the rich, the poor, the sick, the whole, the fleas, the ants, the fish – anything and everything.

13 July 1996

I go through the experience of expansion to the extent that it feels like being a part of the void. My body feels stiff and heavy when I come out of meditation. As *Guruji* says ever so often, "The experience cannot be put into words." Actually it is an event – a happening which, when verbalized, becomes an experience, a thing in the past. We will either add to it or subtract from it because we are talking only from memory.

I see a white flame in front of me in place of the *Guru*. Then I see him standing at a distance, almost like a milestone. This episode leaves me feeling despondent and insecure as if I am being abandoned to find my own way. It is as if he has stepped out of my life indicating that, henceforth, I am on my own. It takes a couple of days to get over my sense of loss and dejection. I am grateful to the *Guru*; firstly, for seeing that I do not become dependent on him and, secondly, for encouraging my sense of curiosity for the unknown.

Evening: I now understand my fascination with horses. It has come from my past lives, as also my fear of riding. In the course of meditation, I see myself as a girl in her late twenties riding through the woods, in what is obviously a European setting. I am wearing Western riding gear, galloping swiftly ahead on horseback. Suddenly, the animal trips and both of us tumble down the mountain-side with rocks and rubble raining down upon us. But, this vision does not evoke any pangs of grief.

All my past life experiences have come forth while lying down after the exercises with my hands placed over the navel area, as instructed by the *Guru*.

14 July 1996

Morning: I hear a voice saying, "State clearly what you want." The lesson seems to say that I should not ask for one thing and then expect something else.

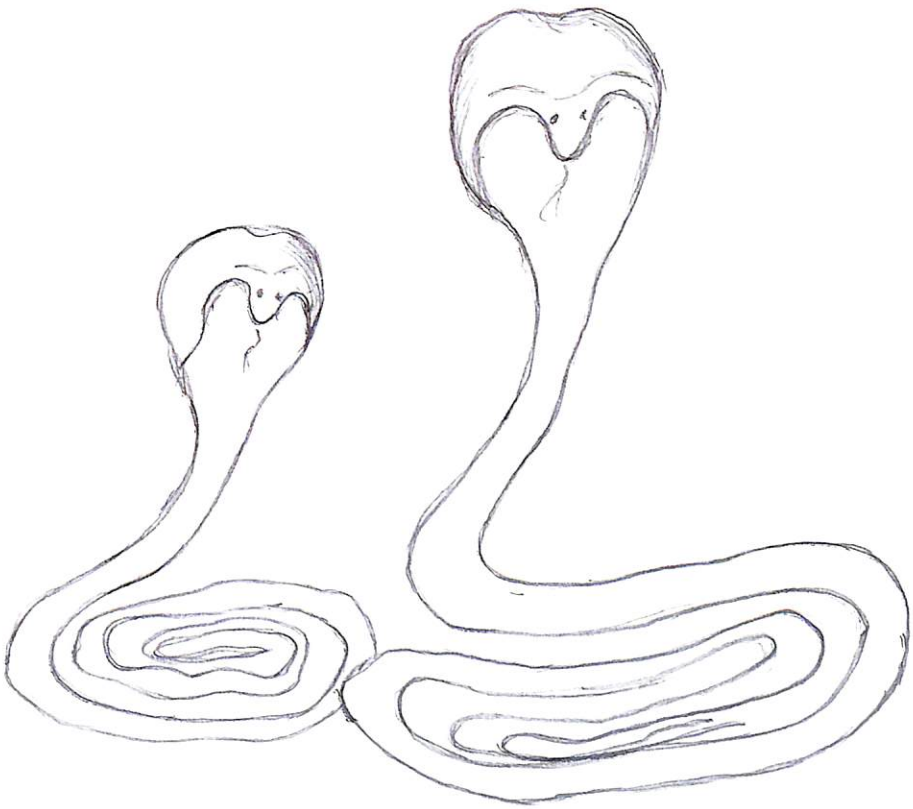
14 July 1996

A child, or perhaps a dwarf, throws a silver ball at me. This is obviously an encounter while passing through the astral realms.

I see a golden hand with a golden *Sudarshan chakra* revolving on its finger.

Evening: I see two cobras sitting together. One is clearly bigger than the other.

This disturbed me when I first read it. In the fabulous tales of India, the *Brihatakathasaritasagara* being a typical example, chasing a silver or golden ball thrown by beautiful children or girls or strange creatures is a sure recipe for trouble, an echo of which is found in the fairytale of The Frog Prince. It looks like an attack from the dark side of the Consciousness, which is jealous and resentful of her recent breakthroughs and seeks to tempt her. Immediately after this, Santosh sees the *Sudarshan chakra*, the traditional weapon of *Vishnu*, famed as the protector and rescuer. The two experiences do not seem to be a coincidence. There is too much internal logic in their sequence of appearance. The two cobras that appear, one distinctly larger than the other, are interesting because they appear at this time. Cobras represent ancestors in the *tantrik* tradition. They usually reveal an unconscious realization that one's spiritual journey was possible only because one's ancestors had succeeded in theirs.



16 July 1996

I start with a feeling of descent, of going deep downward. This must be the process of 'going within'. The *Swadhisthan chakra* is working in full force, giving the feeling of a clear stream flowing and rising towards the head. Slowly and gently, its volume increases until I am a body of clear water. My awareness is total and focused.

18 July 1996

I feel that I am passing through many different vibratory levels. Then, the pathway is streaked with light or electricity, probably because of the speed at which Consciousness is travelling.

Evening: I sense that the *Ajna chakra* is working on the *Manipur chakra* which, in turn, begins to work on the *Ajna chakra*. They both seem to be working on each other.

19 July 1996

While resting in the afternoon, I see the low-angle vision of a man's legs with his big feet and toes twisting, twirling and moving about in dance movements while being seated on a chair. Next, I see his arms from the elbows downward, performing the same movements. Suddenly, from the ground, a form emerges with graceful motions and bows as if to say, "At your service, ma'am." He looks very much the clown and I can't help but laugh. He is, no doubt, a very popular entertainer from one of the rarefied dimensions. I ask *Guruji*, "Does this mean that I now have my own genie like the one Aladdin had?" He answers "No."

The scene changes once again, perhaps to a more peaceful astral dimension. A woman bends and, taking water from a vessel in her hand, throws the water on me with force. At this stage, I wonder if the water has anything to do with remembrance or forgetfulness, or if she is shooing away the genie who is keeping me company. There is a lot of rose pink energy. I'm not sure whether I am generating it or if it is some sort of blessing.

Clearly, the dark side had not given up after the 14 July incident and was waiting for a chance to pounce. This figure is the Tarot Fool, a figure sanitized recently, but a genuine product of the Shadow as its original name, *Le Mat* – The Death, makes clear. It begins by beguiling, and soon entraps one into doing things one shouldn't. Santosh was fortunate that her mental state reflected only non-attachment. She was neither attracted nor negatively attached in rejecting him; she just laughed. However, the terse answer of her *Guru* to her question about a personal genie nipped any potential mischief in the bud, for Santosh would not dream of doing anything her *Guru* had declared off limits. What is significant is that the thought did exist, the dangerous seductive joy of having a personal genie, and the Shadow sought to exploit it. Had her motives been selfish, it would have charmed its way into her psyche. Her curious innocence carried her through this, though the manifestation hung around her for quite some time after.

It is also worth noting that in her descriptions of the lady throwing water, Santosh clearly wonders if the genie is being shooed away. The throwing of the water seems to recall exorcism ceremonies performed to this day.

In what appears to be yet another past life memory, I see a very fair bridegroom seated atop a spirited horse. He is holding the reins in one hand and, with the other hand, pushes aside the *sehra* (veil) of flowers covering his face, to look at the revelry around him. Suddenly, a string of

firecrackers is set off. The loud noise of the firecrackers alarms the horse, who rears up on its hind legs. It goes out of control and gallops at a break-neck speed, going over a cliff, taking the rider along. I see huge rocks and boulders rolling down after them. There is a strange, shiny, silvery glow to this vision and it leaves me feeling saddened to the core of my being.

In another vision I see myself in a wedding dress, along with the bridegroom, kneeling in front of the priest in a church. We turn around after being blessed by the priest and walk down what seems to be the aisle of a cathedral. I see a couple dancing. I am wearing a wedding gown and, interestingly, the bridegroom is the same man as in the previous vision. I wonder if a previous life involved being a European coloniser who met with an untimely death in India.

It seems that the wedding ceremony was carried out twice – once in the church and then in an Indian style.

The scene changes to the rear view of black horses marching away from me in the opposite direction. I am seated in a black carriage drawn by horses. Suddenly, there is an explosion under the carriage, and everything flies into the air. I now wonder if this is a repetitious theme in many lives.

While coming out of meditation, I see a pleasant old face smiling at me. Perhaps it is the face of a harmless astral entity or a benevolent sage. He must inhabit one of the rarefied dimensions I fleetingly pass through on my return from the deeper layers of my psyche, which hold the memories of untold past lives.

22 July 1996

As the energy pervades my whole body, I experience oneness with the cosmic energy.

7:30 am: Meditation of a different kind. There is only the all-pervading energy. My head feels heavy. A solid bar of light cuts slowly through my whole body. I close my eyes; I seem to start moving with the cosmic energy. I am an ordinary person to whom extraordinary experiences are being given. Do I need to change as a result of all this?

Evening: There is an infant girl cradled in her parents' arms. She stretches one arm toward me and then both. I do not acknowledge her. Then, I see myself as the mother holding the child. While I'm holding her, she grows from a baby into a young child and then into a young woman, who is myself. Curiously, I see myself as both the mother and the child. We start dancing together and, in the course of the dance, the mother is transformed into a man who is also me.

It is a very enlightening experience for me. Although we hear that we are all one, my comprehension of it is heightened by having it played out for me visually. I am humbled at the thought that although I am just a speck in its vast creation, the Source has deemed it fit to enlighten me about its ways of functioning.

"So when that energy awakens, a second birth happens. In this birth you are both – you are the mother and you are the child. You alone are both together... You are born, but there is no separate mother and there is no separate child. You are taking birth, and you are also giving birth; your birth is happening through you..."

– *Osho, op. cit., p. 16.*

23 July 1996

Dream: I am standing at a railway station. There is a small group of people waiting for the arrival of a saint. He is a *Sardarji* wearing a *churidar-sherwani* and black shoes. He is elderly and well-built, although not too tall, but straight and very alert.

He arrives and something is put into my hands for me to make an offering. It is *halwa*. When my turn comes, I bend to touch his feet. He hesitates, as if to move away, and then stops. I hold both his feet. He lifts me up and we both embrace. He tells me, "*Beta, seer ko garmi chadh jayegi,*" or "You'll get a fever in the head, my child." He puts his arm around my shoulders and, with the thumb of the other hand, applies pressure to the spot between my eyebrows. Nothing happens the first time, so he presses it again. It is painful; I start laughing and then crying. He goes away.

23 July 1996

During meditation, I see a crocodile coming to snap at my head with its jaws open wide.

The crocodile is a paradoxical figure in Indian culture; both feared as well as revered. It symbolizes the River Goddess *Ganga* and also serves as her mount. *Ganga* washes away all sins, so the attack of the crocodile is not as hostile as it may seem from a metaphorical or metaphysical point of view. It may actually be a peculiar form of grace destroying sin or accumulated *karma*, in a turbulent manner. Nowhere is it said or assumed that the process would not be painful or frightening.

Group meditation at the Guru's residence: There is a resounding echo of the *Omkara* or the sacred sound of *'Om'*. I see *Guruji* as an ancient sage with a long white beard and hair, with his head resting on his chest. He is wearing an orange robe.

"The chakra's associated animal is the light grey or green makara (a sea-monster similar to the crocodile), an emblem of the waters... Jung further observes that when Kundalini arrives at the Svadhisthana chakra it encounters the makara, or Leviathan..."

— *Mookerjee, op. cit., pp. 40, 53.*

24 July 1996

3 pm: While resting in the afternoon, an explosion goes off in the top of my skull more towards the right side. It is like a balloon bursting. The body jerks with the force. After 15-20 minutes, that side of the head is bright and there is a rainbow. After another 5-10 minutes, milk starts flowing over it. Then, the milk seems to be flowing from a height because it bounces off the surface as drops splash around. Then, clear water flows in like an *abhisheka*.

"The sudden jerks in meditation come especially when the Prana becomes slow and the outward vibrations make the mind come down from its union with the Lord to the level of physical consciousness."

– *Sivananda, op. cit., p. 309.*

25 July 1996

I go into meditation almost immediately. I seem to be riding some kind of a flying object very far above the stars, and further on, till I reach massive doors that swing open at my approach. I say, "Thank you" and enter. I spend some time there, then go through one door and then through another one. Later, I conjecture that this is the *Hall of the Akashik Records*. I am aware that I have to learn and absorb – though what I don't know. I return as miniscule particles whirling around and then enter my body. Almost immediately I go out again, circle around somewhere as if doing a recording, and then come back and enter at the heart centre. I go out once again and come back through the left eye. I then settle down in deep meditation. I am aware of my body being suffused with the reddish glow of the *Kundalini*. My head feels heavy; there is a slight tingling sensation.

Twice during the night while asleep, explosions go off in my head – more like a crash of sorts. On reflection, it seems to me that the loud explosions in my head mark the destruction of old *karmas*. I am sure that a visit to the *Hall of the Akashik Records* also signifies the passage to higher levels of spiritual evolution, having cleared up lifetimes of *karma* during the meditation. Such visits signify the conduct of a review of sorts, of an opening up to a newer experience. However, the memories of the exact transactions there are always wiped off by the time I return to normal everyday awareness. At the end of every such visit, I'm left with only a vague idea of having been telepathically exposed to some new knowledge or of being given some special insights.

Chapter Six

FULL OF EMPTINESS

A whisper, and then a silence:
Yet I know by their merry eyes
They are plotting and planning together
To take me by surprise.

A sudden rush from the stairway,
A sudden raid from the hall!
By three doors left unguarded
They enter my castle wall!

They climb up into my turret
O'er the arms and back of my chair;
If I try to escape, they surround me;
They seem to be everywhere.

They almost devour me with kisses,
Their arms about me entwine,
Till I think of the Bishop of Bingen
In his Mouse-Tower on the Rhine!

The Children's Hour
– H. W. Longfellow

I am still left with wonder and amazement as to how systematically the whole phenomenon was presented through this body-mind organism. I was extremely and humbly grateful and thankful that I was made a partner in this revelation. Was it God, was it the *rishis*, was it Source Consciousness or were there entire sets of different realms that were monitoring this whole process of unfoldment?

With the activation of the spleen to its optimum level, the next step that was required was to set my *karmic* wheel in motion once again. The reason why I say 'once again' is because it seemed to have come to a halt; to restart it required inhuman strength. I felt as though an elephant was giving the push. The *Ajna chakra* and the *Manipur chakra,* extending to meet over the *Anahat chakra,* led to the unfoldment of the knowledge of the formation of the universe.

I went through the experience of Witness Consciousness – when the Individual Consciousness merges and identifies with the Source Consciousness. This is a state of total detachment and non-reaction, a state of 'I Am-ness'. Is 'Witness Consciousness' God?

I also became more proficient in moving in and out of the body, and experimenting with different entry points. I discovered that as Consciousness, I am very playful, carefree and adventurous.

By identifying the Witness Consciousness with the state of 'I Am-ness', and both these identical states with God, Santosh has made an extraordinary connection. It is a concept that is found in the old Hindu *mantra, "So ham"* or "I Am That."

The old Aramaic name for God in the Judaic tradition is 'Yahweh' and the word literally means 'I Am'. It is said that when Moses asked for the name of the God who was commanding him, he was told, "I Am That I Am." It is not a tautology but a statement of fact. Orthodox Jews never take the name of God; they write it as 'YHWH' because they believe that only God can truly say, "I Am," since only God truly has Selfhood. She raised an interesting question about the 'I Am' Consciousness that has been pondered over in other times and other cultures too.

Cosmic Consciousness

"This exalted, blissful experience comes through intuition or Samadhi. The lower mind is withdrawn from the external, objective world. The senses are abstracted in the mind. The individual mind becomes one with the cosmic mind or Hiranyagarbha or the Oversoul, the Soul of the Universe, the one common thread-soul or Sutratma. The function of the intellect, the objective mind and the senses are suspended."

– *Sivananda, op. cit., pp. 312-313.*

"I am of nature a Witness of all pairs of opposites; motionless, most ancient, is my form; I am the Eternal Witness of everything: I alone am. That am I, which is the irreducible, immortal, endless factor."

– *Chinmayananda, op. cit., p. 114.*

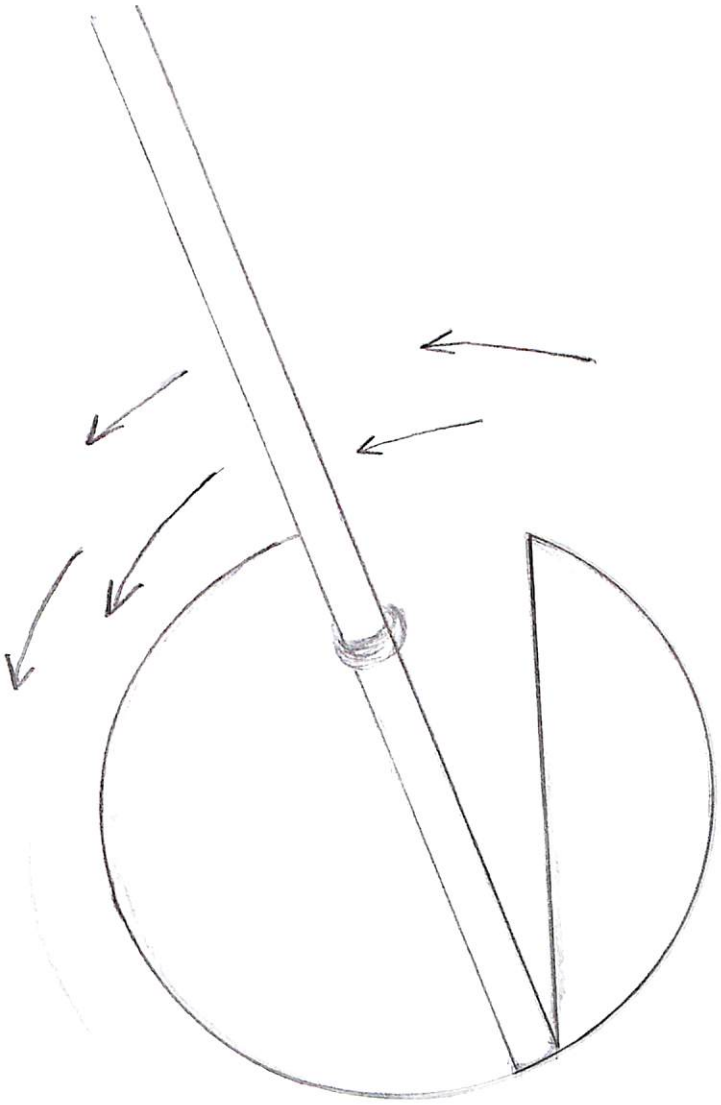
26 July 1996

I am a sea of solid light!

27 July 1996

It seems that a big lever is being used to turn the *karmic* wheel. Massive strength is required to do so.

That Santosh saw a wheel representing *karma* is not at all strange since it is a common image. However, the amount of strength that is needed to turn the wheel could represent the dying away of *karmas* and the consequent difficulty they have in coming into form. Or, it could represent man's determination to chain himself to the wheel even though it is a draining effort. It is a very unusual image in that it resonates at the level of readiness of the viewer. Both interpretations are valid; both represent reality, though neither of them is the precise truth.



1 August 1996

I did not sleep well last night.

Today, a cloud-like substance seems to enter the *Ajna chakra*. I am looking at huge books through the forehead; their pages are turning automatically.

I did not say any recitations before starting the meditation. I am present only in the heart region. In what is a very euphoric vision, I am the sea and the beach. There are crows flitting across. Crows seem to be a frequent presence in my meditation. Even the other day, while meditating, what stayed in my vision was the hazy form of a crow. Then, I am the sky and the birds fly across me.

Suddenly, I find myself running. I keep on doing so until I am only a shadow, still running. Off and on, I see hefty men. I see an old, bald man with a straight posture, rising from my chest. Then, I see my mother. There is always a sensation of heaviness in the chest, as if it is something solid like a stone slab.

Mythologically the crow is the arch trickster archetype, the clever and cunning initiator of the new and unexpected, a harbinger of disconcerting change and alterations to the mindset in manners that are irrevocable.

Since Santosh's experiences were, in a sense, something she never anticipated nor had any expectant inkling of, the crow is an apt symbol for the breaking in of the mind to concepts that are initially difficult to accept but soon become integrated within oneself.

2 August 1996

There's a lighter energy from outside which attaches itself to the energy in my chest, and very gently starts taking it along with itself going into the void. Then it returns and settles down. Only the *chakra*s in the heart and the throat appear to be active. When the left part of the face starts vibrating, I become conscious of crossing a certain vibratory level. At one stage, I am the shimmering water. I somersault and become the landscape, and then collapse into myself. I am aware of myself proclaiming, "I am the Spirit! I am the Spirit!"

Evening: The *Prana* starts working on the left side of my face. There is a lot of pressure, as the energy seems to be trying to push its way around the brain. It generates a lot of pressure in my eyes and the *chakra*s seem to be moving there, as also in the nasal region.

I get a glimpse into a past life. There I see a farmer, wearing a *dhoti* and a black waistcoat, working in the fields. I see myself as the farmer's son, about 25 years old, sauntering out from behind some shrubs. I have shoulder-length hair and wear a *dhoti-kurta*. I am holding onto the ends of a scarf worn around the neck in a rakish manner. I look at *Brahma* seated upon a throne placed on a dais. I walk up to him and whisper something in his ear. From the corner of my eye, I see his long arms moving to enfold me.

I know that I have the choice to move away before the embrace is complete. I am in a very playful frame of mind and I opt to be enfolded completely. I now realize that it is this boy's funeral that I have witnessed on another occasion where he was carried by the *Devas*. (See the entry on 28 June 1996 in Chapter Five.)

3 August 1996

I had reached a stage when, during the course of the recitations of the affirmations, I would slip into deep meditation. I would lose track of whether I was asleep or in meditation. There would be a total loss of awareness. This phase lasted for nearly four to five months.

I now realize that the trick to get into meditation is to relax and do nothing. No affirmations or *mantras* are necessary. The *Prana* starts doing its work of purifying and activating the different centres and the *Kundalini* gets activated automatically. Owing to the naturalness of the process, there is no heaviness or lead-like feeling in my chest. Instead, there is a gentle expansion and a smooth flow of *Prana* in my chest and over my body.

I see a *Swami* in orange robes sitting with flowers and a garland in his hands.

There is a sudden insight that in my past lives, the colour black had played a prominent role. Also, the sage whose feet I touched in an earlier meditation was the *Shani Devata*. I remember that he had worn black shoes. (See the first entry on 23 July 1996 in Chapter Five.)

Evening: I see images of *Lord Shiva* seated in the *yogic* posture, entering my body repeatedly, in quick succession, through the *Ajna chakra*.

5 August 1996

I see a vision of raging floods with people trying to escape in boats. Buildings are collapsing and being swept away with the current. The architecture appears to be Roman, especially the tall rounded pillars.

Such visions might explain the persistence of the belief in the lost and drowned continent of Atlantis. Plausibly, they are really re-creations of an inner sense of the loss and destruction of something beautiful. Perhaps it explains why it endures as a yearning human belief, even though no concrete evidence about Atlantis has ever surfaced. I aver that Atlantis could also be an inner continent, not just a physical spot in history.

After a blank pause, a dim circle of light, the size of a pinhead, comes forth. It draws out my consciousness and takes it away somewhere. The body is without consciousness for 20 minutes. My consciousness returns when it is time to come out of the meditation.

6 August 1996

I seem to have travelled in the astral plane with *Guruji* for company. He asks me to sit down. I see the tall figure of a *rishi* seated at a rectangular table. He has a long beard, long hair and a shawl around his shoulders. *Guruji* and I are seated on either side of the tall figure. Then, there is just stillness.

I see a bright light coming towards my forehead in slow motion. A golden *Sudarshan chakra* is rotating in my forehead.

Group meditation at the Guru's residence: I see *Lord Krishna* in the region of my heart. He is standing under a golden canopy, in the usual pose of playing a flute. His body is also gold in colour.

The golden form of a God or the *swarna rupam*, represents its perfect form and is a rare occurrence. It is interesting that Santosh had an experience of the *Sudarshan chakra* rotating in her head. It is made from the rays of the sun, and its primary spiritual purpose is cutting away all the forms of ignorance so that a person may *really* see. In this case, the spiritual body of the deity which, being made of light, seems to glow like gold.

7 August 1996

Today, Consciousness shifts from my chest to my head. There is a soft glow that is neither golden nor silvery, but of an in-between hue. At one stage, I see a pale lotus over my head. It starts rotating. A white globe suddenly manifests itself and enters my forehead.

8 August 1996

Evening: Experiencing the Void. It seems as if my consciousness is being pulled out by a magnet, from the neck upward. I find myself in what seems like a turbulent black sea. I move in it for some time. Then it seems to gather itself in a concentrated form or rather, my consciousness comes back in a concentrated black stream and forces its way through the forehead. It starts filling me up till I am ready to explode or split into two pieces. I cannot contain it. I see a furnace glowing below the navel area. There is a lot of pressure; I lose courage and open my eyes. My head feels heavy, with a strange, tingling sensation.

9 August 1996

4:15 am: It seems as if I am going deep into the recesses of my being, but there is only the awareness of total darkness within and without. It is the same experience I had last night but less intense. I certainly feel more comfortable than I did last night. I can hear the constant sound of a strong wind blowing in the distance. I have been hearing this for some time. Maybe I am caught between two vibratory levels but I want to be sure. It sounds like the angry humming of a swarm of bees.

7:30 – 8:45 am: A thick layer of Consciousness comes towards me. I feel apprehensive about getting lost, even as someone gently pushes it away. What looks like a prong of light emerges out of my body and floats in the air. It seems to find a head of light (like a car's headlight), which pulls it like a magnet. My body's cord pulls the light-head into the heart centre and then takes it to the head. I realize that I keep losing awareness and getting distracted off and on. Then I find that I am, or my consciousness is, being guided. This reminds me of how when a coach provides support to a novice swimmer, he gets under the swimmer. Similarly, there is another Consciousness supporting me and taking me around. My consciousness is not as concentrated as that of the Guide's. I'm allowed to come back alone and enter at the navel point. Travelling through the umbilical cord I find the passage of this gross body bloody and unclean, till I reach the region of the heart and go above.

"Sometimes, you will feel an invisible help, possibly from your Ishta Devata when you are actually pushed from the physical body into the new plane. That invisible power assists in your separating from the body and going above body-consciousness."

– *Sivananda, op. cit., p. 299.*

10 August 1996

4:15 am: I feel the gentle touch of Consciousness and become aware of being surrounded by it on all sides, within and without.

11 August 1996

The *Prana* starts working its way up from the level of my feet. It traces its course through every nook and cranny of the body till it clears the brain and goes out. (The left side of the head somehow seems to play an important role in this). The *Prana* forms a bar of light along the length of the body, and flattens me out. I stay as light, and really don't know how I'm going to get back to being my normal self. Whatever it is that this experience connotes, the process is fully completed. I think that this is an instance of the individual Self merging with the Cosmic Consciousness.

12 August 1996

A gold-coloured drilling needle is tracing its path along my chest. It goes up to the left side of my head, and next to the centre of my forehead. Once there, it becomes a bar magnet and takes the Consciousness upward, higher and higher.

Evening: In an earlier meditation session, I saw a *pujari* bending down to touch the steps in front of me! Today, I am being offered food laid out in a *thali* with three to four *katoris* in it. It is like when we offer food to the gods. My consciousness seems to be identified with an idol in a temple somewhere in the course of the meditational journeys. When I asked *Guruji* as to what was happening, he said that this was *Sakshi Bhav* (witnessing). At that time, I could not comprehend the immensity of the experience and also did not understand what 'witnessing' really meant in that context.

"This is a state that is to be spiritually apprehended in an immediate personal inner experience. This is where meditation gets fulfilled – and the meditator becomes the one Self, where the triple factors, meditator-meditated-meditation, coalesce to be a vital experience of a total Transcendental Awakening: the Self-realisation."

– *Chinmayananda, op. cit., p. 160.*

13 August 1996

4:15 am: The meditation starts with someone offering me sweets.

All of last week, I did not go into a deep meditation; it was neither here nor there, neither dark nor light. This experience seemed to have come about with a slight shift in consciousness.

Today, I seem to move out and when I return, consciousness moves down like a burning candle melting down. Perhaps the central *sushumana nadi* appears like a candle. I come in at the head, then slowly go down and settle somewhere near the navel. I go out of the right side with a feeling of expansion, and then come back in from the left side.

7:30 am: I experience total rest and peace.

Group meditation at the Guru's residence: There is total darkness within me which turns into a ball. It moves about and then turns into black water, later converting into a gaseous form. It moves out towards *Guruji* and engulfs him.

14 August 1996

I feel rather low; there seems to be no joy. Towards the end of the meditation, while exploring the insides of my gross body, I start sinking in my bodily fluids which are pale, foamy and off-white in colour with a tinge of green. I gradually become a river and start to flow.

18 August 1996

Today is different. I feel as though my spiritual evolution truly begins only now. It seems as if the *chakras* in the forehead and the navel are straining to meet. As they extend, there is light at each end. They join together. The *Prana* or Consciousness spreads upward from the navel to the head, then back beyond the feet, and then sideways and out. I am Nothing. I keep moving in Nothingness. The body is absolutely light. I don't feel it at all; there is no movement of any *chakra* in it. Subconsciously I know that my 45 minutes reserved for the meditation are up, but the Consciousness does not want to return. I come back as a mass of Consciousness and gently pervade the body. When I am offering thanks, water is being poured over me like the *abhisheka*. It is later focused upon my head and I see it as streaks of energy. When I sit up my body feels like a dead weight.

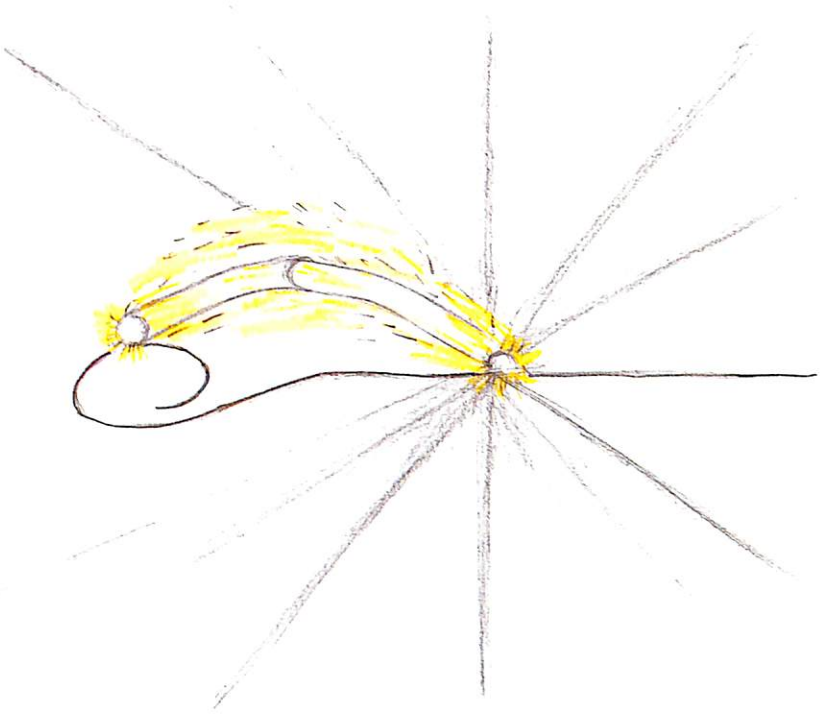
During the meditation, a stage comes when the Consciousness can move out of the body. The *Guru* advises us to fix a time at the start of each session. Once this is done, the Consciousness adjusts itself. Even if one is in deep meditation or engaged in astral travel, the body and the Consciousness almost automatically readjust as the time draws near to return to the normal everyday self, in the here and now. Thus, the Consciousness seems to have an inborn respect for the limits of mundane reality.

19 August 1996

4:15 am: In meditation, I see only the right side of the body. It is transformed into circular ripples of a dark blue liquid. It becomes clearer until I can see myself under the liquid although not as a body but, rather, as Consciousness. I see the Consciousness beginning to spread to the left of the body until I become clear, flowing water, greenish in colour, with fish swimming in it.

7:30 am: The whole body is in flames. In fact, it is not a body but just a black shape.

During meditation, there is a vibration in my feet. The Nothingness is streaked with a dull maroon-coloured glow, and later it gets streaked with rays of light. Then a lotus comes down, touches my chest and travels further down. My body becomes water. The lotus goes underwater and only the tips of the petals can be seen floating towards the head, against the flow. Consciousness is coming towards me in abundance. As it goes over me I see my shape change so that I become sprouting grass.



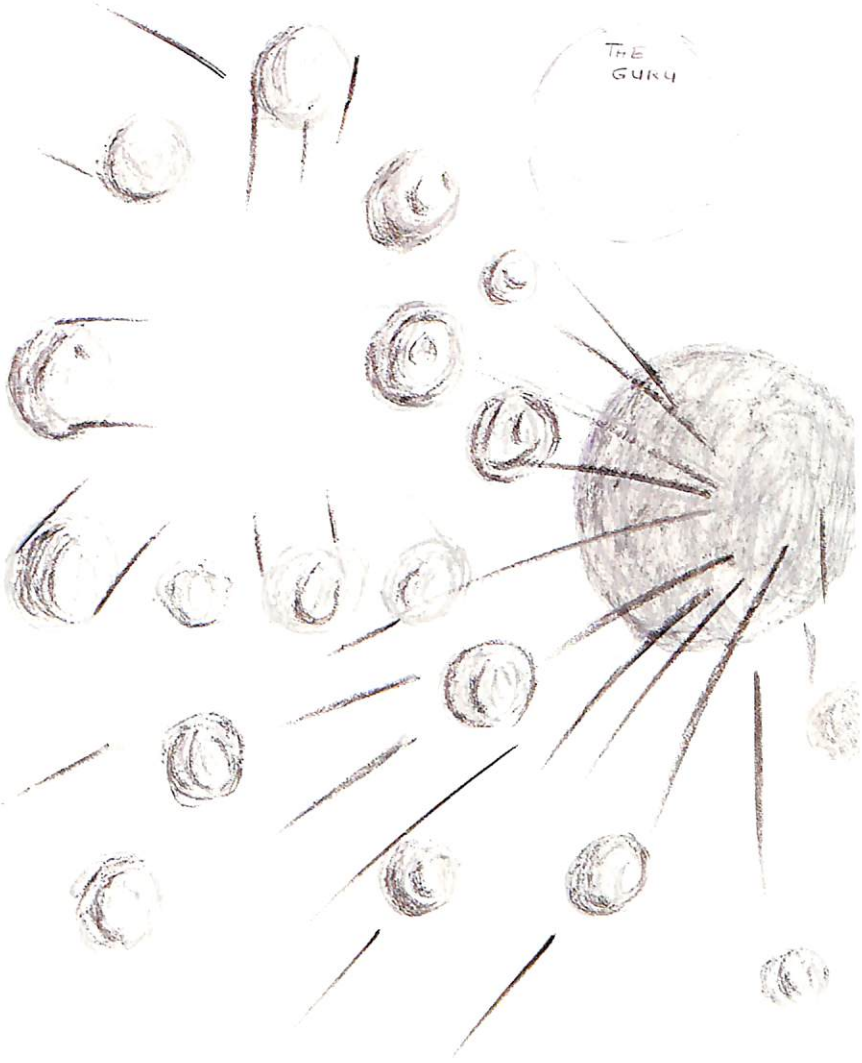
20 August 1996

During meditation, the vibratory level in my left foot is more pronounced than that in the right foot; at times, it borders on discomfort. The chest area and above is light. Within the light is another concentrated light. The concentrated light starts moving and the other light starts following, till the concentrated light slows down and the other one takes over and is left to go on its own. I later conjecture that the concentrated light must be a Guide Consciousness, while the other light is perhaps my own consciousness. After some time, I realize that I'm in Nothingness once again.

What is penned down is not all; there are certain phenomena that are indescribable – words will not convey the real experience.

20 August 1996

Group meditation at the Guru's residence: The *Ajna chakra* gets activated. I'm in Nothingness. Then I see the *Guru* as a massive globe, throwing out small globes. The globes are moving at random like ping-pong balls. Then they start evolving into an organized pattern.


THE
GURU

THE FORMATION OF A SOLAR SYSTEM

"The ultimate root-matter is perceptible only to highly developed clairvoyant power. We must assume a time (though we have no direct knowledge on this point) when this substance filled all space. We must also suppose that some great Being (not the Deity of a solar system, but some Being almost infinitely higher than that) changed this condition of rest by pouring out His spirit or force into a certain section of this matter, a section of the size of a whole universe. This effect of the introduction of this force is as that of the blowing of a mighty breath; it has formed within this ether an incalculable number of tiny spherical bubbles, and these bubbles are the ultimate atoms of which what we call matter is composed...

When the Solar Deity begins to make His system, He finds ready to His hand this material – this infinite mass of tiny bubbles which can be built up into various kinds of matter as we know it. He commences by defining the limit of His field of activity, a vast sphere whose circumference is far larger than the orbit of the outermost of His future planets. Within the limit of that sphere He sets up a kind of gigantic vortex – a motion which sweeps together all the bubbles into a vast central mass, the material of the nebula that is to be.

Into this vast revolving sphere He sends forth successive impulses of force, gathering together the bubbles into ever more and more complex aggregations, and producing in this way seven gigantic interpenetrating worlds of matter of different degrees of density, all concentric and all occupying the same space."

– Leadbeater – 'A Text Book Of Theosophy', op. cit., pp. 18-19.

Going through the works of the great surrealist artist Salvador Dali, I personally believe that his creativity, in the form of paintings, was and has been the expression of the *Kundalini*. It has captured in most vivid form, the havoc she created in his body and mind. It is our good fortune that it burst forth and found an outlet in the form of visual manifestation.

I find his painting 'Exploding Head in the Style of Raphael' (1951), a depiction of the explosion of the body caused by the powerful movement of the great Energy. Similarly, I think 'Galatea of the Spheres' (1952), is his experience of dispersion of the atoms.

21 August 1996

4:15 am: I am in Nothingness and I am Nothingness. There is no feeling of the body; it is not as if I am out of the body but I cannot perceive my gross form.

7:30 am: I am in deep meditation. Towards the end, the body seems to expand from the chest upward. The sensation is that of being lifted into the air in an arc, and coming down. It takes off again and comes down. The vibratory sensation in the feet is missing.

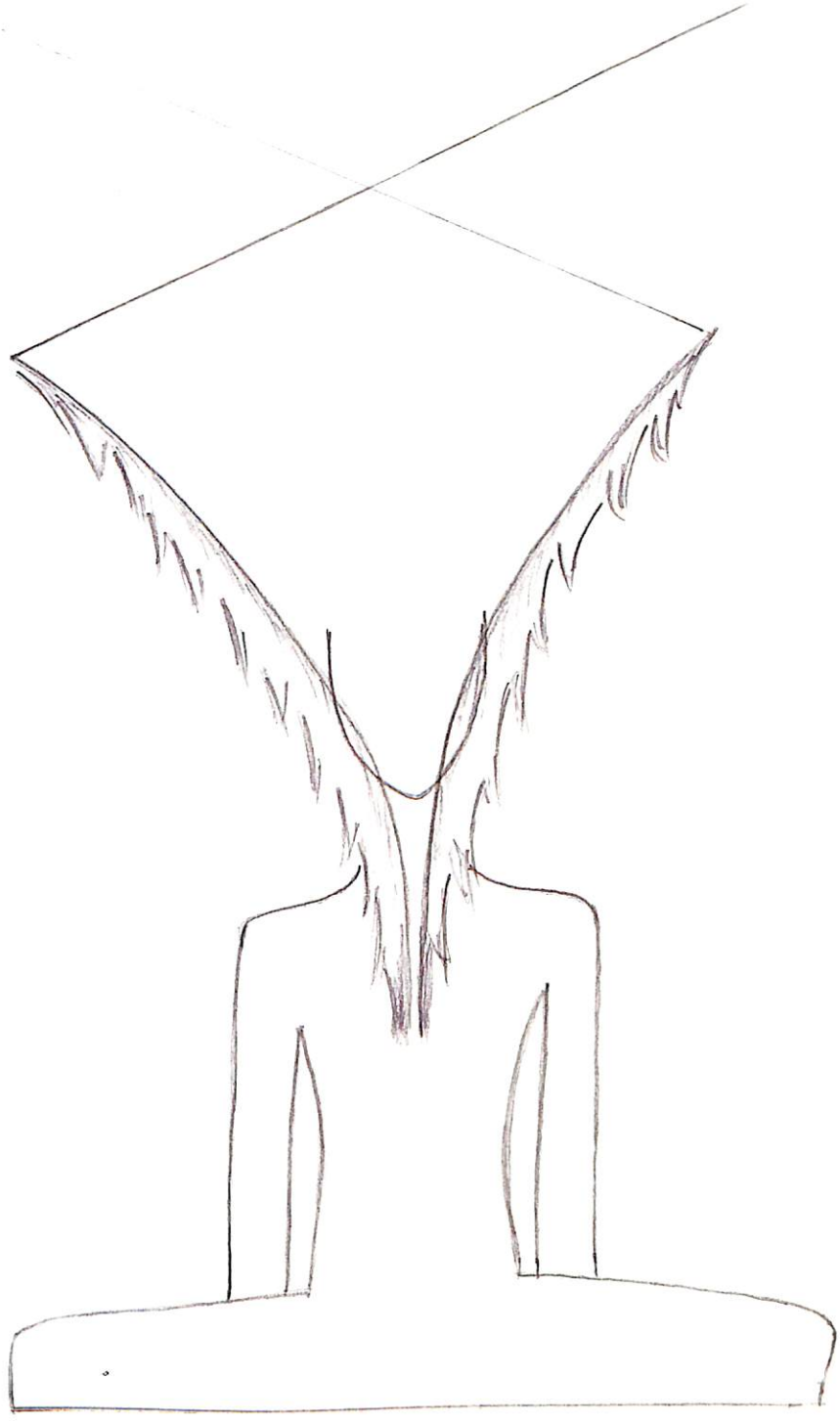
23 August 1996

While hovering over the physical plane, I suddenly find myself going over rows and rows of people sitting as if for some discourse. The Consciousness gets lifted and I find myself going over a river of thick, blue liquid. Then I realize that it is my head and chest that is turquoise blue and flowing at an angle, in rhythm with the Cosmic Consciousness.

24 August 1996

7:30 am: The meditation is different. It seems as if I am breathing through my ears – but don't ask me how this is possible! The breathing is restricted to the area between the ears and the chest. I go out of the ears.

I know I am out of the body, but where? There is no sense of any presence. I know I am not in the body but I don't know where I am outside either. I come in at the chest, go out from there and come back, but it is in blankness – a feeling that is different from Nothingness. The breath is laboured. It seems as if I have wings.



3 September 1996

Group meditation at the Guru's residence: The *Ajna chakra* begins to move. Throughout the meditation, it feels as if the *chakra* extends itself outward towards *Guruji*, gathers some information and then records it. The process goes on. At one stage, I see another form sitting next to *Guruji*. It is smaller – perhaps that of a woman. Both forms are made of light.

4 September 1996

I move out as light during meditation. I am conscious of *Guruji's* instructions about setting a time limit for my astral sojourns. I come back in the form of gold-dust.

At one stage, someone catches me by the hair and rudely jerks me. At another time, a form lifts another and hurls it in my face. No doubt, these are some more fleeting encounters with the beings inhabiting the astral planes. As I pass these different vibratory levels, I am probably seen as an unwelcome intruder. It is a natural reaction on the part of the inhabitants. What matters is my presence of mind. It is these attacks that can affect the human psyche and even result in mental disorders. Then, I feel as if a wall is being pushed into my face.

There is the vibratory sensation of a horse-drawn chariot coming down. I discern the form before it actually manifests itself. I see the void filled with white clouds and a chariot coming towards me drawn by white horses with long, swishing manes. Then I see *Lord Krishna* entering the region of my heart.

Almost as an afterthought, Santosh mentions that she was frequently attacked in her astral journeys! Her focus was so steady on her spiritual quest that she had no time to get beguiled by these mind games – and this saved her. But the apprehensions of attack, as well as the Shadows that rose to confront her in the last chapter, are clearly manifested here. As she said, her attitude pulled her out of any harm. Once again, she sees a vision of *Krishna – avatar* of *Vishnu,* the Protector – immediately after she has shrugged off an astral attack. It is as if she has to refuse being pulled into this sort of dark activity and He is instantly at her side. It is also an interesting sidelight on the ability of the altered consciousness to alternate between polarities.

5 September 1996

The meditation is most dull and stagnant. I see an ugly-looking bird with its huge wings flapping in my face. The bird is rich red and black in colour. It has its mouth open. I wonder if this represents the physical organ of the heart. Then I go out of the brow, hover around the head, and come back in at the heart.

"You may behold a head of marvellous form, of the colour of a flame, red as fire, and very awful to look at. It has three wings of marvellous length and breadth, white as a dazzling cloud. At times they would beat terribly and again would be still. The head never utters a word, but remains altogether still. Now and again there is beating with its extended wings."

– *Sivananda, op. cit., p. 324.*

6 September 1996

4:15 am: Though I am in Nothingness, the experience is most awe-inspiring. I am not sure if I can take it. I break a certain barrier. A great wave of Nothingness, which I can sense as a powerful vortex of energy, comes hurtling towards me and carries me away with it till I get totally lost in it. There is a feeling of complete helplessness and a lack of will. I feel trapped and find myself tumbling over and over in the foetal position. Perhaps I am trapped between two vibratory levels. I remember the *Guru's* instructions about keeping a fixed time and I start calling out to him. As I start an invocation to the *Guru*, a steady force against the hurtling power gives me the strength to exercise my will. I have to will myself into action with great force till I am back to reality.

Somehow, I relate to the experience of *'Avyaktam'* given by *Swami* Sivananda:

"You will have to cross the void also. What appears to you as a void when all the Vrittis have perished is not really a void. This is Avyaktam. Cross this void also. It will try to overpower you. You are left alone now. You have nothing to see and nothing to hear. There is none to cheer you. You will have to depend on yourself. Presence of mind is needed at this critical juncture. Draw courage and strength from within."

– *Sivananda, op. cit., p. 286.*

After this stressful experience, things seem to calm down like the calm after a storm. I see another Consciousness floating towards me and gently surrounding me in a soothing, loving embrace.

7:30 am: I must be out of the body as soon as I begin the meditation. I dive into my womb with a big, black splash. I move through the body towards the head and then move out. I break a certain barrier; I am no longer in Nothingness, but find myself moving quite fast. Then, there seems to be a wall of fire and light pushing me back until I land into my body, which is all water. Then I start moving as Nothingness.

10 September 1996

After being in a state of Nothingness for a week, there is a change today; a feeling of being whole and in complete harmony with the universe. I seem to move up with the body and go on a smooth, peaceful course. I should describe it as the body, the mind, the intellect and the consciousness all being one – an experience of total integration.

I come back, then move out, but it is not the same as before. I sense a change in the vibratory quality inside the ears.

Suddenly, my whole being starts moving once more. The pressure and sound in the ears change. I come to a shimmering blue barrier. I push against it and upon crossing it, I find myself in an area where the void seems to have a light-coloured ceiling. Then I realize that I am looking in the region of the left-half of my brain, which is extending far. There is light at the end. After this, I start coming together or shrinking. This process takes some time.

13 September 1996

Today is significant in the sense that I reach the maximum level of expansion. There is no body consciousness from the neck downward. Doors, the colour of dark red blood, seem to open. I thank them and enter willingly with a desire to learn. Doors open and close continuously. Then I seem to sink in the dark red blood. Later, I wonder if this is myself travelling as Consciousness to the region inside the physical heart. I go on sinking until I become myself. Here, the vibrations of the *Anahat chakra* give me the impression of doors constantly opening and closing.

15 September 1996

I am in Nothingness, then in blackness. The *Shakti* starts rising and pervades the entire body. I also start rising and expanding to quite an extent. Then I start coming back together again. Before touching base completely I start expanding and rising again in the blackness, this time at a faster pace. I try to invoke *Guruji* but I cannot find his place. This is scary. I come down again and, before touching base, I start rising again. I feel that things are getting out of hand, so I make sure I end the meditation.

There is a sound accompanying the meditation; I try to focus on it. I am unsuccessful because it is the sound of emptiness, the sound of the void – a hollow sound. You have to experience it to know what I am talking about.

I wonder if Santosh has contributed an original *Koan* here! This is so much better than the wretched sound of one hand clapping – the sound of emptiness, the hollow sound of the void. Since, as she herself says, you have to experience it and it cannot be described, I think we are safe in assigning a *Koan* status to it. This is the genuine logic-defying, analysis-resistant article. Perhaps all *Koans* are designed to evoke such mental experiences, working in the reverse order for Santosh as it were. It is a tempting speculation.

16 September 1996

All concentration is on the right side of the body. The *chakra* in the right eye is working. I have the awareness of movement rather than expansion. The area is neither dark nor light, till I see a dull light – as big as a car's headlight – descending. This light lowers upon me and goes inside my chest.

During the evening meditation, I try to focus on the tinny sound to find its source. It is all-pervading.

17 September 1996

4:30 am: I sit for an hour of meditation and perhaps I can go on for much longer. A glow comes and settles in the left half of the body. I sense warmth of a rare kind accompanying the glow. I try to will it on the right side but do not succeed.

8 am: I feel I am out of the 'Nothing' syndrome now. My focus is on the sound and its source but it can barely be heard, and it gets faint. The sound is more like that of an aeroplane landing in the distance.

18 September 1996

Afternoon: In a mist, I see a lion loping towards me with light emitting from his nostrils.

18 September 1996

Evening: I am using my left eye. There is a long procession of people wearing turbans. Some are walking while others are travelling in bullock carts, atop horses or donkeys and in all sundry forms of transport. Part of the group on foot is carrying a small, golden palanquin. They climb up a steep, winding path till they come to a golden mountain with a round, open mouth. There is constant movement inside it. The procession of people also disappears inside.

The image is almost self-explanatory and Santosh's comments give enough clues. This cosmic mountain is, of course, The Mountain – the centre of the universe or, as Santosh would put it, the *Region of the Aum*. What is interesting is that this entire vision is seen only with the left eye, the orb connected directly to the right hemisphere of the brain, the intuitive and creative half. Therefore, it is not seeing a real mountain or even an internal reality, but a pure construct of the imaginative spirit. It is a high and holy place and where it is located is totally beside the point.

18 September 1996

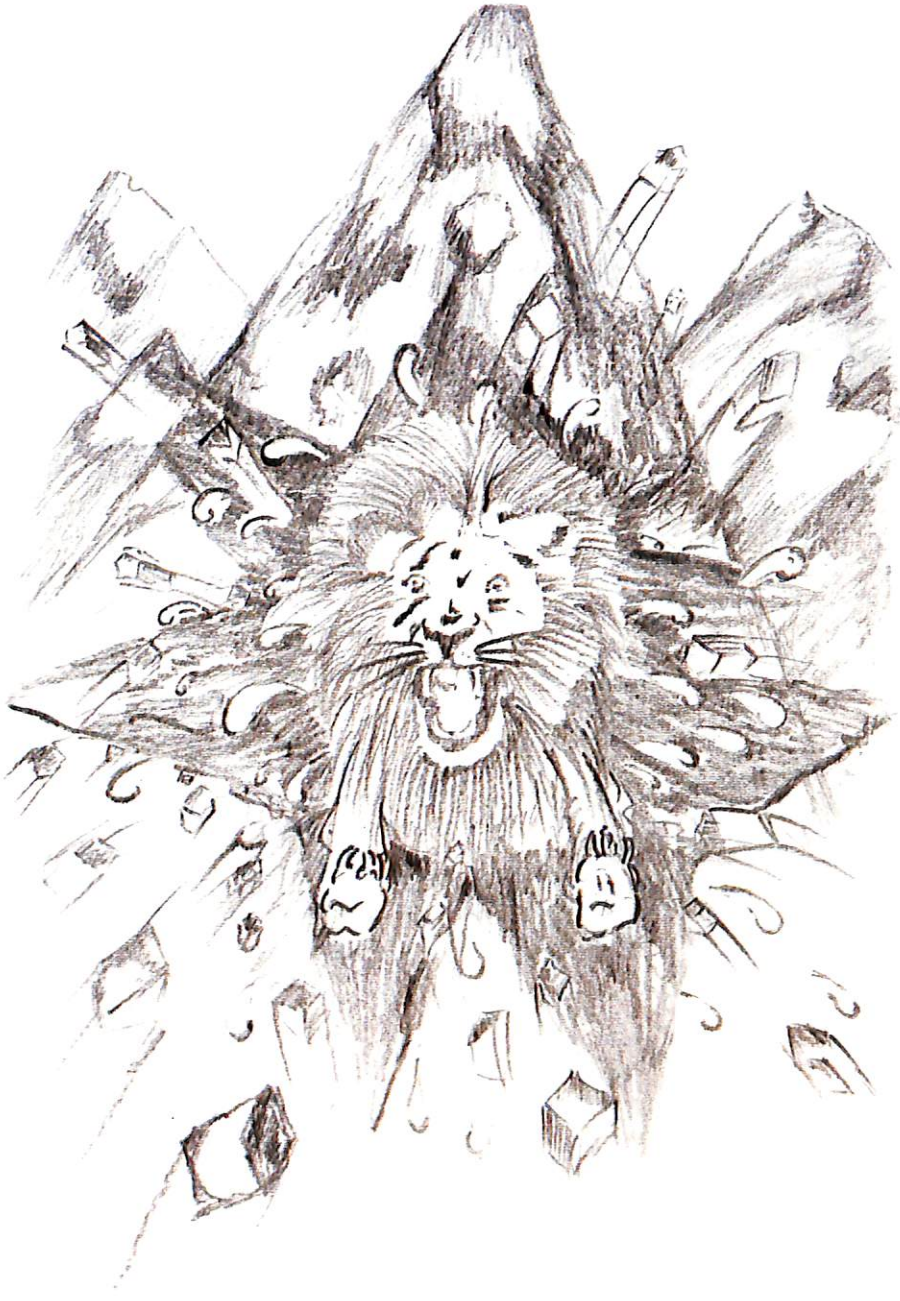
Now I am in the region of the golden mountain. There are people climbing steep stairs. I'm among them. I see my back; I am dressed in a fine-textured gold dress. We are all walking very purposefully, until we reach somewhere.

I find that my left eye gets attached to something like a door handle and brings the object back with it. However, I don't know what I have brought back.

19 September 1996

While meditating in the evening, I see a gigantic, rocky mountain. Through this a huge lion bursts out with force, along with water, and is charging towards me in slow motion. As he reaches me, I pick up a jug of water and start to pour it in his mouth. I look at the lion as a symbol of *Goddess Durga*.

Santosh identifies the lion she sees on this particular day, as well as on the previous day, as a symbol of the *Goddess Durga*. That is a valid interpretation given her cultural background, though she seemed to have been visualizing the *Vishnu* energy recently. In that case, it would be *Narasimha*, the man-lion *avatar* of *Vishnu*. Bursting out of the rock is a *Narasimha* activity too, and the accompanying water strengthens this belief, since *Vishnu* is primarily a God of the Waters. *Vishnu* is a solar deity too, and the lion is a traditional archetypal symbol of the sun. However, none of that is as interesting as the fact that the scene she describes is identical to that great archetype, the Tarot Trump known as Strength. The theme it depicts is the taming of wild, chaotic energies by spiritual strength. All authorities agree that the Tarot figures are archetypal, but this is the first report of an Indian experience of the classic theme.



20 September 1996

During meditation, I immediately find myself underwater. There are fish moving about. Then I get into a state where I am neither dead nor alive, neither asleep nor awake, neither conscious nor unconscious. I try repeating the *Aum* and a *Guru mantra* to see whether 'I Am', but nothing seems to work. After half an hour or more, a vague movement of *Prana* starts most reluctantly and I take the opportunity to snap out of this state of limbo. In the course of this meditation my breath comes out in spurts, sounding like "Phrrr!" I hear this sound three times.

"The sun does not shine there, nor do the moon and the stars, nor does this lightning shine and much less this fire... The air does not blow there. The fire does not burn there. There is neither sound nor touch, neither smell nor colour, neither mind nor Prana in the homogeneous essence."

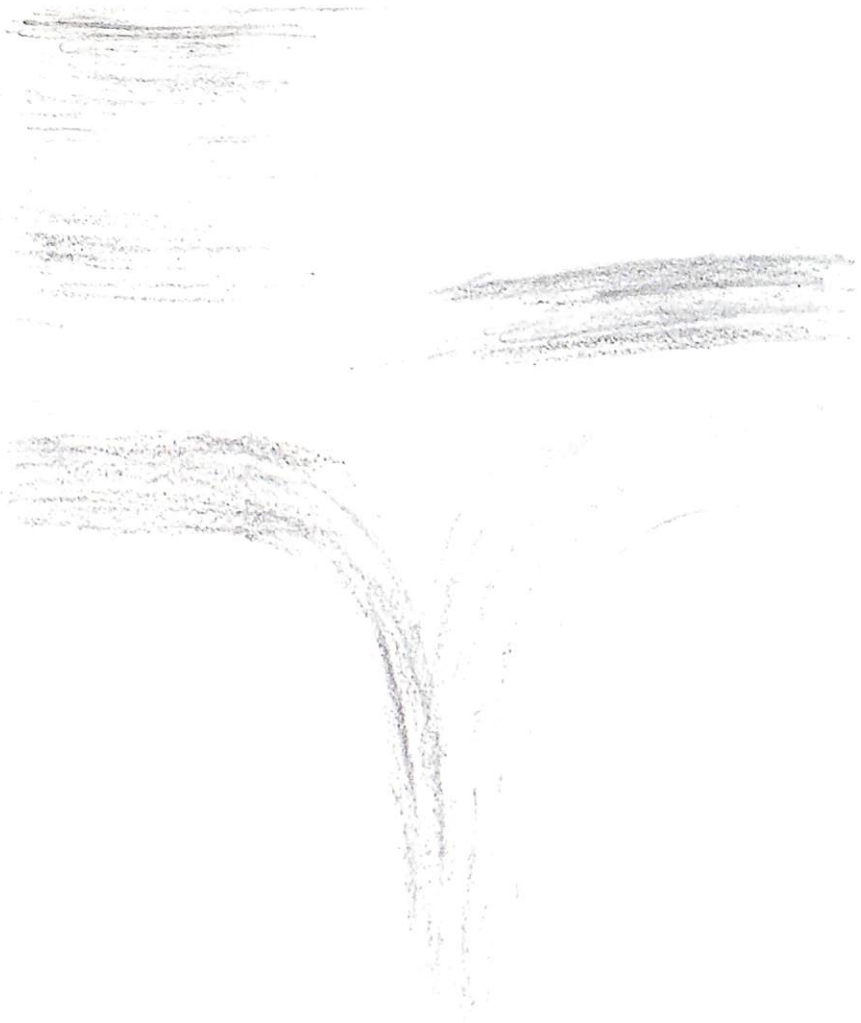
– *Sivananda, op. cit., p. 307.*

23 September 1996

I'm on another planet. It is an arid place devoid of foliage. Then, I step onto a platform of sorts along with a companion. It takes off and we land on a smooth, green expanse. We step down and start walking – where to I don't know. At one stage, there is a concentrated flow of Consciousness, part of which thins out and separates. The concentrated Consciousness gets under the lighter one, divides at the centre, and then both merge into each other. This happens in between the states of stillness.

23 September 1996

I see a small swing or a cradle. Someone catches hold of my hand and thanks me.



27 September 1996

I enter into deep meditation immediately, except for the occasional glimpses of people. Prominent among them is a *pandit,* dressed in white, in the act of putting a red *chunari* with gold tassels over my head. I withdraw. Then, two *sanyasis* dressed in saffron robs flourish a saffron cloth and cover me from head to toe in it.

28 September 1996

The meditation is deep. At one stage, I find myself in the void. There is a big white cloud. I catch it by a corner and eat it. Then, a glass is put to my mouth and I am made to drink its contents until the glass is empty. I hear myself repeating, *"Allah hu Akbar!"* which means "God is Great!"

29 September 1996

I can't sleep because my body is too charged up. I see streaks of light flashing behind my closed eyes.

1 October 1996

I am on a pilgrimage to *Shirdi*. I find it difficult to fall asleep since my body is too charged with energy. I am an electrified being. I dream that a dark, well-built man touches my shoulders. I turn around and tell him to move away. I get the feeling that he is a leper. He starts to assault and molest me. I scream in anger, bite off his tongue and spit it out. The whole struggle seems very real and physical. I think of *Kali*.

The dark side has still not given up its attacks on her and assaults her in *Shirdi*, a pilgrimage town, a place where she would feel safer than usual and let her guard down a little. Santosh's response was to call upon the Primeval Powers resident within, known in India as the Dark Goddess *Kali*, and her response is typical of that awesome energy. The tongue is the prime symbol of passions as it is the centre for taste, which is regarded as the core passion. Biting the entity's tongue off and spitting it out represents an obvious measure of success over the dark side. This time, she responded forcefully instead of ignoring it, as she has done in the past. Perhaps as a consequence, there is no *Vishnu* vision to follow in sequence as was the pattern, since there is no longer any need to do so.

A few days later, she actually sees herself merged into *Vishnu* in the form of *Ram*. There is no separateness between them anymore. Henceforth, the visions of *Vishnu* cease.

2 October 1996

During meditation, a gentle stray dog comes and starts sniffing at my hand. I go into deep meditation. The dog stays with me. The figures seem more real as if they are actually there.

4 October 1996

Someone gives me a hand; I get out of my chest as an old woman.

5 October 1996

A hand that is extended helps me exit from the chest.

8 October 1996

I see featureless human shapes at the heart. They are forms in motion. A man's form lifts his arm and aims as if to shoot at me. Then, a form goes through the motions of bringing the arms up, joining the hands, going down on the knees and bowing. This is repeated at the heart level.

Afternoon: I'm offered a *thali* of food but I don't take anything. Someone takes the food and feeds me.

I am a young man in the centre, dressed in a saffron robe, with long hair. There is one figure on my right and a younger one on my left. I put my arms around their shoulders. One is *Hanuman* and the other one is *Laxman*. I hold both of them close to me. I am *Ram*.

Group meditation at the Guru's residence: The strange visions of the previous days become clearer after I discuss them with *Guruji*. I am Consciousness in Totality. The figures who offered food and bowed down are manifestations of Consciousness. Food being offered to anyone reaches me. Anyone bowing in the temples or paying obeisance is doing so to ME. I feel good.

When in meditation, my consciousness becomes a part of the Absolute, taking over the role of witnessing rather than just being the omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent reality. There is no place where I am not. All actions, thoughts and deeds are directed towards me and come to me. I am the Witness to all there is. I am the Source. What comes to me is returned manifold. I remain unaffected as the Witness Consciousness.

I realize that although I have been through fires, storms, rain and even a shootout, I remained unscathed. This leads me to wonder and question what this 'I' really is... Even if the body is burnt to ashes, I still Am. So, what am 'I'?

I am that which does not necessarily need the body to be. However, upon having decided to be embodied, I then have to, paradoxically, set myself on a course of several lifetimes to rediscover my true self and come to the awareness that I am the All.

Chapter Seven

CONCLUSION

There will be other towers for thee to build;
There will be other steeds for thee to ride;
There will be other legends, and all filled
With greater marvels and more glorified.

The Castle-Builder
– H. W. Longfellow

Ever since I started the course in *Brahma Vidya* in August 1995, I entered into the area of self-discovery. The course revealed a potential within me, which I did not know existed. I had ventured into an arena which I had believed was only for renunciates. A housewife had no business going through such an experience, particularly one who had no inclination or who could not sustain interest in any specific subject over a long period of time. I have surprised myself.

Though the journey was embarked upon in a state of unawareness, it soon aroused my curiosity to delve deeper into it. The right and the left cortical regions had to keep pace with each other in order to record simultaneous holistic observations and reflections, to make sense out of the strange phenomenon.

I now have a clearer understanding of the experience I was going through. Having expressed a wish and a desire to know the origin of my Source, the mechanism of the body-mind organism was set in motion to give me exactly that. This realization dawned after a lot of contemplation, learning and understanding that the process which was set in motion was with the expression of a 'wish'. The purpose was to create awareness towards the seriousness of the spoken word no matter how carelessly or casually uttered. My experience has helped me become more aware of what I think and say.

I was also given a visual display of what my body-mind organism needed to go through in order to fulfil a particular wish. This brings home to me the realization that as we go through life expressing ourselves without thought, concern or knowledge of what it entails, unknown to us, we set in motion the machinery of our being that is constantly kept in motion to try to fulfil our wishes. Most of the time, they are not fulfilled mainly because we think of one wish and then, even before the process starts and the body-mind organism gears itself to deliver, another desire or wish presents itself. This throws the whole system into a state of confusion, creating 'dis-ease' in the organism. The previous desire or wish gets pushed back and stored in the memory bank as data, until it gets an opportunity to surface. This will probably happen at a time when it serves no purpose. If we could avoid this constant overlapping and focus on one thing at a time, we can create miracles in our lives.

What has unfolded for me is the ancient knowledge of the scriptures as recorded by the *rishis*. However, while the ancient knowledge was in the form of words, my experience has been channelled in the form of illustrations. It is a visual journey which maps out the step-by-step changes brought about by an expressed desire or wish. This is probably because the message adjusts itself according to the time-frame or era it presents itself in.

My knowledge is deeper due to this experience; I enjoyed not only the outcome but also the intricate process that an individual's body, mind and intellect have to go through. No amount of reading or study could give me the experience of the actual working of the *Kundalini* when she is awakened and starts her purposeful journey from the *Muladhar chakra,* located at the base of the spine, towards the *Sahasrar chakra*. She will push her way through any blocks she encounters on the way. The only way to safeguard the body, mind and intellect when the energy moves is to exercise total surrender. The trouble starts when the energy faces resistance in any form – the worst being fear. Once the *Kundalini* is blocked by fear, she will move into any channel that she finds open and, since her role is to enhance the function and quality of whichever *chakra* she flows through, one should hope that she moves into a developed *chakra* or area of the human psyche.

The *Kundalini* experience is a most exciting and challenging adventure. I would willingly start the process all over again, just for the joy of it.

THOUGHT FORMS

All thoughts come to us from without and, therefore, we must treat thoughts as guests and not allow them to become hosts. The appropriate method of dealing with thoughts is to *observe them and let them pass!*

Since my perception is best through visualization, I am given ample proof as to why thoughts should not be allowed to build a permanent residence within us but allowed in only as visitors! I have seen that every thought that was fed into my mind immediately assumed a form. It stayed with me till I looked at it and acknowledged it before it moved out in the same form, from my consciousness.

You can do a little exercise for yourself:

Think of any person, place or thing and then look into your mind. Do you see how your mind has created a form almost instantly? So, if these thoughts are not allowed to move out, what is going to be happening is exactly what happens to a one-room apartment with 20 people occupying it. There is going to be a spillover into the doorway, into the passageway and down to the stairway and into the compound. If you cling to your thoughts and do not release them, there is going to be clogging of the outlets and rot will start setting in as the plethoric thoughts jam your system.

Imagine hundreds of thought forms going yak-yak-yak in your brain – you are bound to have a heavy head or a migraine! If this form of energy starts putrefying, depending on the *chakra* it is related to, it is bound to cause an ulcer, tumour or just plain congestion. If not rationalized or worked out and released, this energy becomes a part of your consciousness as your chronic 'dis-ease', especially if it is a fatalistic or pessimistic thought.

If we do not live consciously, then we are allowing all and sundry thoughts to filter into the subconscious, which works mainly to

produce an output. I view the subconscious as a restricted operator in the sense that it has no discriminative power. It does not know the difference between good or bad, right and wrong. Its job is to produce results. How important is it then that the conscious mind stand as a sentinel and always be aware and alert to check everything that passes into the subconscious. This is what is going to create your future!

Imagine the subconscious to be like a big earthen pot. In the course of your life, you put some wheat into it, then some rice, then some rubble, then some gold and silver and again some dirt and so on. Now, this pot has a hole at the bottom. What is the order in which you receive what you have placed inside, and in what form?

As I said, the subconscious cannot discriminate: it only performs its duty of producing results. If, during the course of my conversation with a friend, I tell her, "You make me sick or you are a pain in the neck," these thought forms filter into the subconscious and produce their results in course of time. That is certain! If, however, I am conscious of the power of thoughts, I would immediately replace my statement with, "I do not agree with your style of working" or "This statement of yours is presenting a challenge to me," or something to that effect.

Finally, to de-condition our conditioned behaviour patterns we need to create a set of affirmations or positive statements for ourselves like:

"I am whole, I am strong, I am perfect." – *Mental Physics*

"In the here and now I am experiencing Sourceful abundance."
– *Master Charles*

We need to keep affirming them during the course of the day so that they become a part of our system and create their positive vibrations for us. With constant practice, we become watchful of what we say and with awareness, we reprogramme our data bank and create a new us!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In 1995, Santosh Sachdeva entered the most significant stage of her spiritual life when she started attending the course on Mental Physics (also known as *Brahma Vidya*), conducted by Justice M. L. Dudhat. The impact of the *Guru* and his teaching, combined with the remarkable visions and experiences she underwent, transformed her ideas of existence and allowed her to access deeper levels of understanding with complete surrender to the plan of the Universe. She lives a calm yet busy life with meditation as its daily central pivot; an inspiring example that the life spiritual and the *Kundalini* are normal things in the world, accessible to all who are willing to make the effort.

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GLOSSARY

aadesh Spiritual command.

aarti Ceremonial ritual, involves showing an auspicious lighted lamp borne on a hand-held salver, in the face of an idol of worship or an exalted person, on special occasions. This traditional ritual of illuminating the image of god, with lighted lamps waved in particular sequences, comprises a major section of the ritual of worship known as *Puja*.

abhisheka Ritual ablution of the image of god with a variety of liquids, but pure, sanctified water and milk are the clear favourites. Oil and honey are sometimes used; fruit pulp in water or milk is common too. The liquid collected after the ceremony is peculiarly sanctified and very popular as *prasad*. Kings, representative of the divine upon earth, used to have this ceremony performed for them when they ascended the throne. This is not anointing as understood in the West, but a head to toe dousing.

Ardhanarishawara God as half-man, half-woman.

atman Soul.

Aum, Om All-pervading sound of the Cosmic vibrations; the origin of all Creation; a symbolic manifestation of the Infinite Reality or God.

aura Energy fields that surround the human organism, visible with heightened spiritual consciousness or by the practice of energy-healing work.

Avatar Literally 'descended'. It refers to the manifestation in bodily form upon the earthly plane of a particular deity, usually *Vishnu*, for the performance of some great deed that has ethical and moral imperatives. An avatar may not be the power equivalent of the original deity, only as much divine strength being given as is necessary for the task.

Brahma The Creator God of Hinduism. One of the Hindu Trinity.

Brahma Vidya Knowledge of the Self.

Brahman The supreme experience of Godhood, the Impersonal Absolute God.

Brahmin Priestly caste of Hinduism and traditionally regarded as the 'highest' caste.

Brihatakathasaritasagara The Great Ocean of Stories. It is a gigantic, colossal collection of tales and a marvellous source book on ancient Indian beliefs and cultural practices. It has been shamelessly ripped off by every culture that came in contact with India. Unfortunately, it is completely neglected today because most people are not even aware of it.

chakra Wheel or disc. In *yogic* literature, one of the several centres of consciousness located in the etheric body, usually depicted as a lotus flower.

Chetna Consciousness. It is one of the key concepts in Hindu thought.

Chi Chinese version of *Prana*.

Chinnamasta A dramatic allegorical figure of the great Mother Goddess *Kali*, depicting her as an upright figure with self-decapitated head held in one of her hands and the spurting blood nourishing all life that drinks of this primal fluid.

chunari Long veil worn over a traditional Indian dress.

churidar-sherwani Traditional Indian dress worn by men.

Devas Gods; ethereal beings inhabiting the *Devlok*.

Devlok Abode of the Gods.

dhoti Traditional dress for men worn from the waist downward, made from cotton or silk.

dhoti and kurta Traditional loose attire preferred by those on the spiritual path.

dojo Training hall of all the martial arts.

Durga Fierce Warrior Goddess regarded as the supreme power in the universe by some sects of Hinduism.

Ganga Most sacred river in all Hindu belief. Its waters are supposed to instantly redeem any sin.

Ganpati *Ganesha*, the elephant-headed God of Knowledge, Arts, Wisdom and Auspiciousness, who removes obstacles and prospers all undertakings. Hence, it is mandatory to pray to him when beginning all new ventures.

Guru Teacher or guide who removes the darkness of ignorance, bringing Realization to the disciple.

Guruji Respectful term of address for one's *Guru*.

Guru mantra *Mantra* given by the *Guru*.

Hall of the Akashik Records Hall of memories; a supernatural location in the subtle dimensions of the universe where, purportedly, each human life is recorded in excruciating detail. The Individual Consciousness visits it in the after-life to scrutinize and review its *karmic* record and avoid similar mistakes in future incarnations.

halwa Sweet dish.

Hanuman *Vaanara* God of Strength and Wisdom, chief devotee of *Ram*.

Hatha yoga Hard, physical form of *yoga*, famous for the many twisted postures assumed by its practitioners. It is used as a preliminary to condition the body for the rigours of the advanced forms of *yoga*.

havan kund Sacrificial fire into which offerings and oblations are poured.

Hiranyagarbha The 'Golden Egg' principle of all creation, and a great cultural motif in the texts of ancient India.

ishta devata Literally the 'God one likes', indicative of the aspect of Godhood to which one feels a particular attachment and which becomes the focus of one's devotion and spiritual practice.

Jabala Upanishad A minor *Upanishad*; the *Upanishads* are the principal texts of the *Vedanta* system.

kafni Plain robe.

Kali Ancient Black Goddess of War beloved of the *tantriks* and regarded as personifying the Absolute by many sects. Her worship seems somewhat bizarre but all actions are overlaid with symbolic meanings accessible only to those in the know.

karma Based on the principle of reincarnation, the system of Divine Justice whereby people face the results of their positive and negative thoughts and actions.

karmic Pertaining to karma and its unfolding.

kata Stylized movements or forms-work that are the heart and soul of a martial art.

katori Small bowl.

kewda Sweet-smelling fragrance.

Ki or ***Chi*** Japanese and Chinese versions of *Prana*.

Koan Zen practice of asking impossible and absurd questions for which there is no logical answer, thus forcing the student to find a non-rational answer from the Altered Consciousness which results from thinking about the koan.

Krishna *Avatar* of *Vishnu* and his most popular form in terms of worship.

kriya Particular technique of breathing in meditation. This is to be understood in context with *Kriya yoga*. A *kriya*, strictly speaking, is an action performed in the context of a ritual.

Kriya yoga Extremely effective form of *yoga* popularized by the great *Swami* Yogananda. It emphasizes breathing exercises, *yogic* postures and meditation upon Vedantic principles.

Kul-Guru Family *Guru*.

Kundalini Manifestation of the dynamic female cosmic energy within the individual body, lying nascent in a coiled form at the base of the spine.

Kundalini yoga Branch of *yoga* which is inner directed and is concerned primarily with the awakening of the *Kundalini* and its consequent spiritual experiences.

Laxman Half-brother of *Ram* and one of the great heroes in the epic *Ramayana*.

Le Mat The Tarot Fool, a figure sanitized recently, but a genuine product of the Shadow as its original name, *Le Mat* – The Death, makes clear.

Mahashakti Kundalini 'The Great Power *Kundalini*', where the *Kundalini* is identified with the Great Goddess.

mantra Sacred chant, constituting a precise arrangement of syllables with a particular occult significance, especially empowered by the application of the *Aum*. The science of *mantras* derives from the knowledge of the subtle yet transformative influence of thought, power and sound frequencies in the etheric or astral dimensions.

matka Pot.

mudra Particular positions in which the fingers are held for their symbolic or esoteric meanings. Each *mudra* conveys a certain message for the initiate. It supposedly brings you to a certain state of awareness.

nada Sound, usually implying a haunting resonance. Used also as a synonym for the universe which is supposed to be composed of sound.

nadi Etheric channel for energy flow within the body. Out of a total of 35 million nadis in a human body, there are 100 major ones. Among these, there are three main nadis: the *pingala* or the solar *nadi*, on the right side of the spinal column; the *ida* or the lunar *nadi*, located on the left side; and the most important one of all, the central *nadi*, called the *sushumna*, the vehicle of the balanced energy flow, indicative of spiritual growth.

Narasimha Man-lion *avatar* of *Vishnu*.

nashayati Destroys.

Omkara Sacred sound of *Om*.

Padmanabha *Vishnu's* navel (hence his name *Padmanabha*, the Lotus-navelled) upon which sits *Brahma*.

pandit Learned *Brahmin* who has mastered many of the sacred texts.

Prana Life Force or vital energy, which constitutes the breath in living beings.

Pranic Pertaining to *Prana*.

prasad Consecrated offerings of food distributed to worshippers after the service of *puja* is over.

Puja Worship of God, usually in the form of an image. There are innumerable ways in which to do this consisting of a plethora of rituals, rites and complicated sequences of sacred chants and offerings.

pujari Officiating priest who has the necessary technical knowledge to correctly perform the many stages of ritual that go to make a *puja*.

Ram Hero of the great Indian epic – the *Ramayana*, regarded as an incarnation of *Vishnu*.

Ramayana One of the two great Indian epics, written by the seer Valmiki and telling the story of the incarnation of *Vishnu* as the perfect man, known as *Rama*.

Region of the Aum A psychic plane, not a physical reality, where the constituent element is the eternal vibrations of the *Aum*.

rishi Sage who has realized the *Brahman*. There are distinctions of expertise amongst *rishis*.

sadhana Adoption of meditation, asceticism and devotional practices on the spiritual path.

Sadhu Holy man; renunciate; wandering mendicant on a pilgrimage.

Sakshi Bhav Witness Consciousness.

Samadhi One of the final stages of meditation, when the aspirant enters what appears to be a trance state, usually with an absence of a body or ego consciousness; the experience in meditation of Oneness and Cosmic Unity.

sanyasi Renunciate on the spiritual path.

Sardarji Respectful term of address for Sikh males, identified by their distinctive turbans and beards.

sehra Veil.

Shaiva Worshipper of *Shiva*, known by the distinctive three horizontal lines made of sandalwood paste or ash worn on the forehead.

Shakti Literally 'Strength' but used as a synonym for the creative power of the universe which is female, as well as a generic name for any goddess including the *Kundalini*.

Shaktipat Energy transmission from the *Guru* or a Higher Source to the disciple, bringing about an evolutionary transformation of consciousness.

shaman Spiritual intermediary between this world and the non-visible ones, usually a wise man or a medicine man of tribal culture, responsible for healing and the psychic well being of his charges.

Shani Devata Saturn, the planetary symbol worshipped as a deity.

shikhara Highest section of the traditional Hindu temple which reaches up from the roof to the pinnacle.

Shirdi Small town associated with Sai Baba, one of the most powerful Masters of the last century.

shishya Disciple; especially one who has accepted initiation in a particular spiritual path from a *Guru*.

Shiva One of the Hindu Trinity, the androgynous God of Destruction.

Shivalinga Representation of the union of the male and female principles symbolizing Creation. Worshipped in stone, in the phallic form as *Lord Shiva* who Himself is half-female.

Siddhivinayak Name of *Ganesha*, the elephant-headed God as well as the most famous *Ganpati* temple in Mumbai city.

sindhoor Red vermilion powder applied in the parting of the hair to denote a woman's married status.

sitar Stringed musical instrument.

"So ham" "I Am That."

Spleen chakra It is not indicated in the traditional texts, but its place is taken by a centre called the *Swadhisthan*, situated in the area of the generative organs.

Sudarshan chakra *Vishnu's* discus, made of the rays of the sun, and his favourite weapon of choice.

sushumana nadi The nadi, or energy channel, that leads to the *Sacral chakra*, the *sushumana*.

Swami Title used to address a God-realized person of one of the several monastic orders who practices renunciation, celibacy and asceticism and who represents spiritual authority.

Swamiji Respectful term of address for one's *Swami*.

swarna rupam 'Golden Form', a particular and rare form of manifestation of a God.

tandoor Clay oven.

tantrik One who practices *Tantra*; pertaining to *tantra*.

thali Plate with a flat bottom and prominent curved rim, especially used in rituals.

Vaanara Semi-divine class of being found in Hindu mythology having human and simian features in common with humans, as well as common cultural and societal norms.

Vampiri Original term for vampires.

varayati Obstructs.

Vedanta One of the six core philosophical systems of India, itself further divided into ten principal schools. It is rooted primarily in the *Upanishads* and teaches the final emancipation of the soul from the bondage of karma and rebirth. It has been the dominant religious philosophy of India for over a thousand years now.

Vishnu Literally 'He who pervades'. One of the Hindu Trinity. Famed as the Protector and Rescuer.

yoga Union of the individualized consciousness with the Absolute, through the systematic practice of meditation, based on the eight-fold path prescribed by the ancient Sage Patanjali. There are several schools of *yoga* including *Hatha yoga*, *Laya yoga*, *Mantra yoga*, *Karma yoga*, *Jnana yoga*, *Raja yoga* and *Bhakti yoga*.

Yun Ken 'The roots of the clouds' – a poetic description of clouds.

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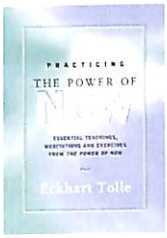

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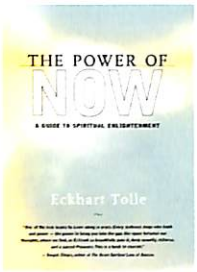

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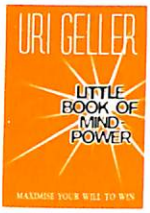

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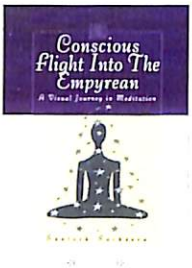

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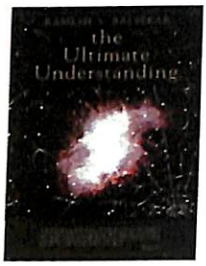

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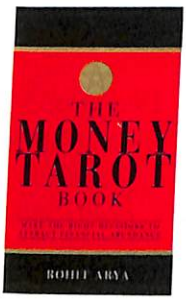

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